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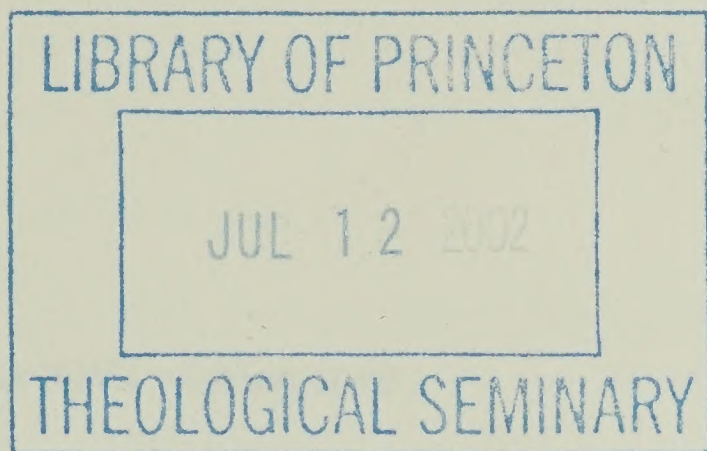
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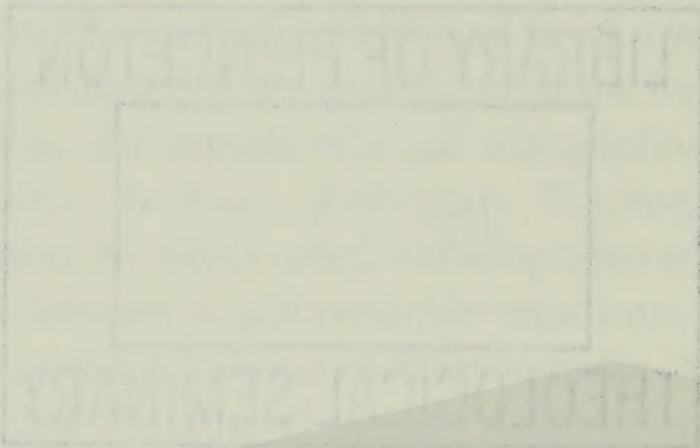


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EDITORIAL

In May of 2001 the *KOINONIA* editorial board selected Ray Owens' timely paper, "Closing the Black-White Achievement Gap: A Public Theology for Public Education Reform," as the centerpiece essay for our annual interdisciplinary forum held at Princeton Theological Seminary. In June of 2001 the board invited a diverse group of respondents to discuss public education reform from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. By August of 2001 the October date for the Fall Forum was set in stone and all involved were looking ahead to a spirited and meaningful conversation. Then on September 11, 2001, the world suddenly changed and all our plans seemed inconsequential.

John Updike's words in the September 24, 2001, issue of *The New Yorker* best capture how many of us—especially those of us attempting to understand God's relation to these horrific events—felt on that day: "Suddenly summoned to witness something great and horrendous, we keep fighting not to reduce it to our own smallness." The editorial board was faced with a very difficult decision: Do we continue as planned with the Fall Forum? Do we postpone it to a later date? Or do we attempt to put together a forum addressing the current situation? The latter choice was dismissed right away. Without appropriate time for prayer, reflection, and discernment, no one wanted to rush headlong into a politically heated discussion on the events of September 11. Postponing the Fall Forum proved difficult since few, if any, fall dates remained available on the Seminary's master calendar (unless we re-christened the event the Spring Forum!). So in the end we made the choice to move ahead as planned. Public education reform was a pressing and relevant social issue prior to September 11. It is even more pressing post September 11, given the return to governmental deficit spending needed to sustain the "War on Terror."

Mr. Owens' essay is a critical response to two leading models of public education reform: the voucher system and charter schools. In effect, Mr. Owens argues that any reform that does not improve public education for *all* children is ethically suspect, since it fosters the long-standing inequities in school funding that can be traced to racist ideologies shaping social structures. Accordingly, any attempted reform that leaves our inner-city (primarily minority population) schools under-funded while creating more "choices" for suburban (primarily white) working and middle-class schools supports *de facto* segregation. One crucial issue underlying the black-white

achievement gap is inequitable funding for public schools. Perhaps, as respondent Diane Whitmore has argued, the pragmatic solution is to create equity by directing more funding to the most deprived school districts. However, what Ms. Whitmore fails to take into account is the second issue (as identified by Mr. Owens) underlying the black-white achievement gap . . . racism.

Critical race theory (CRT), a movement originating within legal scholarship but effecting broader societal impact, seeks to uncover how race and racial power is constructed and perpetuated by our system of laws. Coining the term “racialism” to describe structures and systems that (perhaps unintentionally) continue the practices of racial domination, CRT argues that “color-blindness” is a dangerous chimera. Thus, CRT takes issue with the traditional liberal position that favors abandoning race-consciousness in favor of a neutral, merit-based system for distributing resources and opportunities since “merit” is itself a contextually defined concept. The recognition that the “persistent problem of racism” is the result of historically contingent social and political struggles is the cornerstone of CRT: laws reflect social prejudices and are therefore major factors in the construction and reinforcement of racist structures. Therefore, Mr. Owens, in his analysis of the black-white education gap, suggests that social reform must begin “by dismantling the ideology of racism and the view of humanity it embodies” (3). The respondents adequately address the first issue identified by Owens—inequitable funding for public schools—yet, in my opinion, the second (perhaps central) issue of race remains largely unexplored.

In the first response to Ray Owens’ paper, Sandra Kunz explores the role of congregational Christian education as a resource for closing the black-white achievement gap. She begins by sharing a moving confession about the fear behind our attitudes toward education reform: fear that any attempt to change educational funding structures will take away vital resources from our own children. Ms. Kunz presents concrete and attainable goals for local congregations seeking to make a difference in public education and also rekindles hope in God’s “transformative power for good” (43). Christopher Rogers, in “Justice, Pluralism, and School Choice,” defends school vouchers and charter schools by drawing upon many of the same ethical and theological resources employed by Mr. Owens. In the end, he differs from Owens only insofar as he is willing to consider school choice programs as part of a broader program of educational reform.

Micah Watson's response challenges what he perceives to be the central weakness in Owens' article, namely that, given the lack of empirical evidence for or against school choice programs, and the long history of failure by the current public education system, Owens is too quick to dismiss the possibility that such reforms could possibly lead to broader and more equitable school funding. In Mr. Watson's words, "it is unclear why Mr. Owens sticks with an institution that for its existence has grossly failed the African American community" (57). Finally, Diane Whitmore presents strong empirical evidence that public policy seeking to overcome the black-white achievement gap in education should allocate increased funding for deprived schools since cost-benefit analysis suggests that investment in early education "more than pays for itself in increased future wages for small-class students and decreased social costs associated with a reduction in teen pregnancy and crime" (65). Unfortunately, public policy is rarely decided solely by pragmatic considerations. As with most scientific models, a cost-benefit analysis is extremely reductionist and does not adequately account for the myriad social and cultural forces (including racial prejudice) competing for the same limited resources.

All our contributors bring valuable insights to the discussion. In fact, their participation in the Fall Forum validated the editorial board's decision to hold the forum in spite of the events of September 11. It proved to be one of *KOINONIA*'s best-attended public forums, and members of the Princeton Theological Seminary faculty voiced their opinion that it was one of the best public forums ever held at the Seminary. Yet, in the discussion that followed, the issue of race was glossed over and made to seem part of America's pre-civil rights past instead of a prevalent force in the formation of current school funding policies. Sadly, this is the most telling reality of racism: its ability to continue to shape our beliefs and actions in spite of our best intentions because we are all inheritors of and participants in racist structures. Enjoy this issue. It is a true labor of love, put together during a difficult time, yet made possible by everyone's commitment to public education. One final note: these essays are not offered as pre-packaged solutions, but as humble contributions to an ongoing conversation about a problem that confronts each and every one of us. Our hope is that this issue will inspire your own contributions to the discussion.

RUBÉN ROSARIO RODRÍGUEZ
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Closing the Black-White Achievement Gap: A Public Theology for Public Education Reform¹

RAY A. OWENS

INTRODUCTION

IN THE SUMMER OF 1990, I ALONG WITH FIVE HUNDRED OTHER RECENT COLLEGE graduates became a part of the work and mission of Teach for America, a national teacher corps of men and women who commit to teach for a minimum of two years in under-resourced urban or rural school districts. I was assigned to a bilingual first-grade class in the South Central region of Los Angeles. The school enrolled 1200 students in a building built to accommodate half that number. Of the 1200 enrolled, thirty-three were assigned to my class. But only twenty-nine student desks were available, so that some children had to use makeshift workspaces along the back wall. For the first three months of school I had no math books, and I was instructed by the school administration to “just make do.” The school library was an old portable classroom with books randomly strewn about the shelves. There was neither a librarian nor a card catalog system. There were no funds for field trips and no music, art, or physical education teachers. The halls were dark and dingy, and the smell of urine greeted anyone who passed near the boys’ bathroom.

Against the backdrop of these dire conditions, I attempted to teach my students to read, write, and do arithmetic. Unfortunately, I as the teacher learned much more than I was ever able to teach my students. I learned with brutal clarity and by first-hand experience the crippling power of inequity

¹ Early work on this paper began in a class on the “Theology and Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” taught by Professor Peter J. Paris in the fall of 2000. His critical feedback has been indispensable to this project.

in public education in the lives of black and Hispanic youth. I learned what it looks like when children are denied a decent education. I gained new insight into the depth and devastation of the urban education crisis. It is this crisis that I intend to illumine and respond to in the analysis that follows.

No reasonable person can deny the glaring inequalities that exist in the American system of public education. Public schools in communities like Trenton simply do not compare to the public schools in places like Princeton. The differences in student achievement, quality of teachers, condition of facilities, and level of resources make these places seem worlds apart rather than a short drive away. Why does this dramatic differential exist? How did such a disparity come about? What can be done to eradicate this gap?

In this essay, I argue that the contemporary crisis in urban education is rooted in, and reflective of, a history of racial injustice, and is maintained by a system of structural inequities that privilege the narrow interests of predominantly white suburbanites vis-à-vis those of the urban poor. Furthermore, I suggest that “school choice” initiatives, one of the major current trends in urban school reform, wrongly perceive both the underlying causes and the effective solutions to the pattern of failure in the urban public schools. Rather, my analysis makes it clear that a viable solution to the urban school crisis must seriously attend to the structural and ideological character of the problem.

As an ethicist working out of an African American Christian tradition, my aim is to bring the moral resources of the Christian faith to bear upon the crisis caused by the vast inequalities in America’s public school systems. The issue of inequity in public education is not simply a sociopolitical problem; it is at its core a *moral* problem that has profound *theological* implications. I contend that the legally sanctioned distribution of grossly inequitable public educational opportunities is ideologically grounded in a racist view of humanity. Martin Luther King, Jr., once suggested that “the whole political, social, and economic structure of a society is largely determined by its answer to this pressing question [‘what is man?’]” (1985:17). If we want to know what is this society’s view of humanity, we need simply to analyze the structures that form our system of public schools. The stratification that characterizes the difference between the public schools attended by predominantly white wealthy suburbanites and those populated mostly by the black urban poor reflects the stratified hierarchy of humanity inherent in the underlying ideology of racism.

I should clarify at this point that my aim is not to suggest that the whole of the public education crisis can be understood under the rubric of race. Indeed, under the forces of class discrimination, for example, poor white children (often in rural communities) are also the victims of substandard public schooling. However, this reality does not minimize the fact that racism is a primary and pivotal source of the problem of educational inequity. Moreover, though other peoples of color—Hispanics, Native Americans, and various Asian groups, to name only a few—are often victims of poor schooling, my focus will be on the experience of African Americans. The distressingly disproportionate distribution of substandard public education encountered by black students warrants a focused consideration of the particularities related to their experience. As my analysis will show, the current inequity in public education is rooted in the history of forced enslavement and subsequent legally sanctioned segregation of African American people. Thus the alarming concentration of Black Americans in ineffective public schools today is merely a continuation of the racist practices that have persisted over the years since the end of legalized slavery. Hence addressing the so-called “achievement gap” in education must begin by dismantling the ideology of racism and the view of humanity that it embodies. Moreover, a more inclusive view of humanity must be incorporated into the ethos of our society. Toward this end, Christian ethics has the potential to make a helpful contribution.

A racist view of humanity stands diametrically opposed to traditional Christian anthropology. The Judeo-Christian tradition affirms the inherently equal worth or value of all persons based on the understanding that all humans are created equally in the image of God and equally share the status of children of God. The sacred equality of human persons before God renders all racist ideologies and practices idolatrous. Though many Christian groups and persons have stood clearly on the wrong side of justice with regard to racism and the view of humanity that it promotes, their actions represent an aberration and not an affirmation of a Christian anthropology.

A Christian view of humanity offers a corrective to the racist pattern of inequity in public education. In particular, the theological anthropology of Martin Luther King, Jr., is a resource for constructing a viable public theology to address this insidious social ill. While other theologians have had more to say on the doctrine of humanity than did King, few have been as effective at attending to this concept on the levels of both theory and praxis. King was able to explicate effectively the sociopolitical implications of his

view of humanity so as to expose the injustices inherent in this nation's social, political, and economic structures and encourage their reorientation in concert with the moral demands of an ethical view of humanity. Thus King's view of humanity, with its strong sociopolitical content, provides a strategic framework for assessing and addressing the crisis in public education.

To be sure, by appealing to King's theologically construed concept of humanity, my argument is faced with the serious challenge of mediating the obvious tension between an explicitly Christian perspective and the pluralistic context in which public education occurs. Indeed, this is the challenge of public theology. With regard to this challenge, the strength of King's theological anthropology is that it has the capacity to transcend the community of the Christian faith and find common moral ground with others from diverse non-Christian contexts. One does not have to embrace the explicitly Christian aspects of King's anthropology in order to accept the basic premises of his view. As King well demonstrates, there are numerous secular affirmations of the Christian view of humanity that he supports. In the vein of what David Tracy (1981) calls an "analogical imagination," King's view finds "analogues" or parallels to Christian concepts in the insights drawn from secular psychology, biology, and sociology as well as in the founding documents of this nation. A careful review of King's anthropology will illuminate its viability as a resource for the public dialogue on education reform.

KING'S VIEW OF HUMANITY

The biblical concept of the "image of God" functions as the theological basis for King's view of humanity. The image of God, with which all humanity is endowed, embodies the essence of what it means to be human. Interestingly, although various interpretations of the image of God have been offered over the centuries by Christian thinkers, King is not preoccupied with attempting to achieve an exact characterization of the form that God's image takes in human identity. Rather, for him, the significance of the image lies primarily in its *function*. In King's thought the notion of the image of God establishes a special sense of relatedness between God and humans. He refers to this image as "the indelible stamp of the creator" that is "etched" in every person (1968:97). The significance of the stamp is not as much in the attributes that it implies as in the relationship that it reflects. "Human worth," King argues, "lies in relatedness to God" (1968:97). Hence the Divine/human

relationship that is reflected by the image of God becomes a principal prism through which to view the nature of humanity. This theological foundation gives rise to the three themes that constitute the core concepts in King's view of humanity: worth of persons, the unity of humanity, and the concept of freedom.

Worth of Persons

King, in common with broader Christian tradition, views all humans as innately possessing an equally sacred status by virtue of the image of God implanted in every person. God's image in each human person functions as a declaration of the intrinsically equal dignity and value of each individual before God (King 1986:118–19). Because of this inherent equality before God, King does not separate human personality and human worth. The former implies the latter. Thus an essential aspect of what it means to be human is to possess this essential worth. Any denial of the *worth* of a person is a denial of the *humanity* of a person.

In King's thought, the link between the image of God and the Divine/human relationship provides the theological rationale for essentially equal human worth. The intrinsically equal and sacred worth of all persons, sometimes referred to as the "sacredness of human personality," is inscribed in the human personality by virtue of the Divine/human relationship that is reflected by the image of God in the human person (King 1968:118). God is the Divine parent of all humanity. By creating all humans in God's image, God makes all humans equally sons and daughters in the family of God, thereby affirming the equal sacredness of all persons. Thus King often attributes the worth of a person to the claim that she or he "is a child of God" (1967:72).

The sacredness of the human personality implies that humans should treat one another also in accordance with the essentially equal human value that their common relatedness to God implies. The Kantian ethical principle of treating humans always as ends rather than as means reinforces King's thinking on the essential worth of all persons. According to King, segregation reduces its victims to *means only* rather than respecting them as *ends* in and of themselves. Treating persons as ends involves respecting the equal dignity intrinsic to all persons by virtue of their equal status as images of God and resisting the practice of treating persons merely as pawns in service of the interests of others. Similarly, Martin Buber's concept of the "I-

thou” relationship provides King with a paradigm illustrating respect for the equal worth of persons. All human relationships should be characterized by the mutual human worth implied in the “I-thou” relational structure. This paradigm suggests that each subject treats and respects the other as a subject and never as an object. In King’s view, systems of racial injustice promote what Buber described as an “I-it” relationship, in which oppressed persons are treated as objects whose worth is viewed only in terms of the benefits they render to those who are responsible for their oppression (King 1986:119). Both the person as means only and the “I-it” ideologies reflect an abuse of the “image of God” and a violation of the essentially equal worth with which all humanity is endowed.

In King’s view segregation reflects a view of humanity that can never be reconciled to the anthropology of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Segregation, like all racist structures, functions on the basis of a false understanding of humanity. It wrongly assumes that distinctions that are irrelevant to human worth, in this case racial identity, may justify the grossly unequal treatment of a part of humanity by another part of that same humanity. He argues, “This innate worth referred to in the phrase the image of God is universally shared in equal portions by all men. There is no graded scale of essential worth; there is no divine right of one race which differs from the divine right of another” (1986:119). Because all persons are equally endowed with sacred worth by God, all persons should be respected equally by other human beings. Hence social, political, and economic structures that promote unjustifiable inequality among persons violate the principle of equal essential human worth. In a viable view of humanity the equal worth of all persons is respected in a way that allows all people to flourish. Hence in King’s thought the notion of the worth of persons functions as a standard by which to measure the adequacy and accuracy of a society’s understanding of humanity.

The Unity of Humanity

The “unity of humanity,” a second core concept in King’s view of humanity, is integrally related to the first principle. God’s image in human personality not only reflects the equal essential worth of persons, it also bears implications for the way that humans are related to one another. The image of God

in humanity implies a parental relationship between God and humans. The logical extension of the parenthood of God is the idea of the sister-brotherhood of humankind. King also found biblical warrant to support this conviction in the Pauline assertion that all nations were created by God out of one blood. Such a claim, he contends, even has the support of scientific evidence. "The world's foremost anthropologists," he writes, "all agree that there is no basic difference in the racial groups of our world. . . . There are four major blood types and all four are found in every racial group" (1986:122).

The unity of humanity is further affirmed by what King often refers to as the "sociality of human life" (1963:65–66). This phrase expresses the idea that human beings are inherently social creatures whose well-being and identity formation rely upon cooperative interaction with others. This is what King means when he writes, "The self cannot be self without other selves. I cannot reach fulfillment without thou. Social psychologists tell us that we cannot truly be persons unless we interact with other persons" (1986:122). King found concrete evidence for the principle of sociality in countless instances of human interrelatedness in the world:

Every nation is an heir of a vast treasury of ideas and labor to which both the living and the dead of all nations have contributed. . . . We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women. When we arise in the morning, we go into the bathroom where we reach for a sponge which is provided for us by a Pacific islander. We reach for soap that is created for us by a European. Then at the table we drink coffee which is provided for us by a South American, or tea by a Chinese or cocoa by a West African. Before we leave for our jobs we are already beholden to more than half of the world (1968:181).

The reality of human interdependence, in King's view, calls for mutual concern and responsibility among all humanity. The well-being of humanity is contingent upon humans acting cooperatively toward the realization of a community where the good of the whole is prioritized as a strategy for achieving the good of the individuals constituting the whole. For King, the very structure of the universe as created by God implies the need for such a cooperative vision of humans living in interdependent communities. He claims that "the universe is so structured that things do not quite work out rightly if men are not diligent in their concern for others" (1986:122).

The Concept of Freedom

Finally, King's view of humanity stresses an inextricable link between human life and the concept of freedom. King asserts that "the very character of life demands freedom" (1986:119). Like the worth of persons, the concept of human freedom emerges from King's understanding of the image of God. Freedom, according to King, constitutes "the highest expression of the image of God." In the sermon on the doctrine of humanity King states: "theologians have interpreted the image of God in many ways, and after studying all of them, I've come to the conclusion. The highest expression of the image of God in man is freedom. Man is man . . . because he's free" (quoted in Baker-Fletcher 1993:118).

The language and thought of Paul Tillich provides King with the theological construct upon which to base the connection between freedom and the image of God. King's statement equating freedom with the image of God is clearly drawn from Tillich's *Systematic Theology* (1967). Moreover, King defines freedom as the capacity for deliberation, decision, and responsibility, the same three terms that Tillich uses in defining freedom. The first of these human capacities, *deliberation*, involves the freedom to consider and weigh one's alternatives as to what one may become or do. Closely related to this idea is the capacity for *decision*, by which humans make choices based on the outcomes of their deliberations. Finally, the capacity for *responsibility* suggests that freedom renders humans ultimately responsible for the decisions that they make (King 1986: 120).

For King, the freedom inherent in human personality is not without limits. Human freedom is limited and shaped by human destiny. King writes, "We are both free and destined. Freedom is the chosen fulfillment of our destined nature" (1986:120). In King's thought, however, destiny does not constitute determinism. The connection he makes between freedom and destiny is best understood in light of the Tillichian formulation upon which King draws. For Tillich freedom and destiny represent an ontological polarity in which "destiny points not to the opposite of freedom but rather to its conditions and limits" (1967:184). Hence destiny does not contradict the freedom implied by the human capacity for deliberation, decision, and responsibility. Rather in Tillich's words:

Destiny is that out of which our decisions arise . . . it includes the communities to which I belong, the past unremembered and remembered,

the environment which has shaped me, the world which has made an impact on me. . . . Destiny is not a strange power which determines what shall happen to me. It is myself as given, formed by nature, history, and myself. My destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny (1967:184–85).

This connection between freedom and destiny, which King borrows from Tillich's thought, increases our understanding of the meaning of freedom for King's view of humanity. In King's understanding, freedom is a prerequisite for human destiny. In order for one to fulfill his or her destiny, one must be able to experience the freedom that is essential to the meaning of humanity. The extent to which human freedom is circumvented by the social, political, and economic structures of society represents the degree to which human destiny, and consequently human dignity, also are limited. This is the insight that is behind King's claim that in the denial of a person's freedom, "the very nature of life is altered and his being cannot make the full circle of personhood because that which is basic to the character of life itself has been diminished" (1986:121).

Though King's notion of human freedom is drawn largely from Tillich's thought, King extends this principle well beyond the theoretical realm where Tillich's treatment ends. King pushes Tillich's ideas on freedom toward their logical sociopolitical conclusions. He employs the idea of human freedom as a moral condemnation of racial segregation. Segregation, he argues, denies African Americans the freedom to deliberate, decide, and take responsibility, because it severely and unjustly limits the options available to black people. These imposed limitations, from King's perspective, constitute not only a political injustice but also a violation of the freedom that human life inherently demands in order for each person to fulfill his or her human destiny. In a sermon delivered in 1957, King said, "To rob a man of his freedom is to take from him the essential basis of his manhood. To take his freedom is to rob him of something of God's image" (Baker-Fletcher 1993:120).

Justice is the axiological principle upon which these three core themes turn. The content of King's understanding of justice is largely informed by his view of humanity. Justice is constituted by a respect for equal human dignity, a concern for others based on the unity of humanity, and a respect for the freedom that human life demands. In the connection between justice and human personality lies the pivotal point from which the

sociopolitical implications of King's concept of humanity emerge. Justice demands that the core characteristics of humanity—equal worth, unity, and freedom—are not treated simply as abstract principles but are actualized in the real experiences of all human beings. Thus the structures of society must be ordered to promote these fundamental human conditions for all people. All structural realities that run counter to the core concepts in King's view of humanity are repressive and in need of deconstruction. King's view of humanity provides a helpful guideline, therefore, for defining what justice demands in the public education crisis. The lens of King's theological anthropology, I contend, exposes the racist view of humanity that undergirds the structure of public schooling in America and demonstrates the need for a more just system. A careful consideration of the structural aspects of public education will help substantiate this claim.

STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

Paramount among the structural forces framing the education crisis is the system of public school funding. In virtually every state the primary funding for public schools is generated from local property taxes. Schools are funded based on the amount of property taxes levied in the municipality or local community where they are located. Thus the level of funding available to each school district is determined largely by the property values within the community.² Districts with higher property values have a capacity to generate higher tax dollars and fund their schools at a higher rate of per-pupil expenditure than do those districts with moderate and low property values.

This funding formula imposes an inherent structural bias against poor urban communities by ensuring a school-funding disparity between the affluent and the poor. Urban communities simply lack the level of property values necessary to fund their schools at a sufficient level. Moreover, because poor people cannot afford to live in affluent communities and because the

² In most states the limited property tax funding in poor school districts is supplemented with other funding sources (e.g., lottery income, other state taxes, federal dollars). However, these supplemental dollars are never sufficient to bring per-pupil expenditures in poor schools up to the level of their suburban counterparts. See Wise 1967:130–32.

zoning boundaries that separate one school district from another are drawn in a way that creates wealthy districts and poor districts rather than socio-economically diverse districts, the possibility of shared resources between the urban poor and wealthy suburbanites is virtually non-existent.

The local property tax school-funding formula reflects and protects the interests of the dominant class whose position of power and privilege enables them to formulate and formalize such a policy successfully. Even though property taxes are actually state taxes and not local taxes, the laws in most states allow local communities to retain these particular funds in a way that privileges the interests of the wealthy (Wise 1967:104). These property taxes, which are public funds generated for a public purpose, are disproportionately distributed to wealthy, predominately white communities for the public education of their children. The interests of African Americans and the poor were clearly not represented in the decision-making process that yielded such a biased funding system. It is no wonder, then, that they have been locked into a system of dysfunctional and underresourced schools.

The inequality in per-pupil expenditures between wealthy and poor districts is incredible. Kozol highlights these inequalities with examples in cities like New York and Chicago. He notes that in 1990 the wealthy New York suburb of Manhasset spent \$15,084 per pupil, while urban New York City schools spent less than half that amount, \$7,299 per student. In the same year, a Chicago suburb expended \$9,371 per student, whereas the Chicago public schools spent only \$5,265 (Kozol 1991:2-3). These samples are only part of a wide-scale pattern of inequality. In fact, research conducted by three major education-related organizations reveals that nationally, schools in wealthy suburban communities spend "as much as ten times" that expended by their urban counterparts (Anyon 1997:7).

The limited funding afforded poor urban schools translates into poor educational opportunities for urban youth. These inadequacies take the form of old and decaying buildings, unmanageable class sizes, limited instructional supplies, outdated equipment, inexperienced and poorly paid teachers, limited access to qualified teachers in the important fields of math and science, as well as a host of other disabling disparities.

The degree of disparity between urban and suburban schooling is reinforced by the social and economic conditions under which poor students are forced to live and learn. The exodus of city industries and middle-class families, along with a steep decline in federal funding to cities, has produced

disproportionately high levels of poverty, joblessness, and physical devastation in American urban centers (Anyon 1997:5, 62–63).³ Middle-income employment opportunities are virtually non-existent for the poorly educated and under-educated persons who primarily populate American cities. As a result, opportunities for urban dwellers are limited either to unemployment or low-wage service positions that fail to provide a livable family income (Wilson 1996:152).

The chronic failure of urban schools to provide students with a quality education reinforces the lowered ceiling of opportunity afforded to urban youth. In most cases the youth educated in inner-city public schools become high-school dropouts or very poorly educated high school graduates. In either case, their chances of acquiring legitimate work that provides a decent standard of living are miniscule. Given these gloomy prospects, urban youth have little incentive for taking their public education very seriously.

Moreover, coupled with the conditions of chronic poverty and joblessness are several attending social ills, such as crime, gang violence, drug trafficking, and family breakups (Wilson 1996:21). Life is a daily struggle for many urban youth. They do not have the luxury of walking to school on streets that are safe. Many of them live every day with the very real threat of encountering violence and other criminal behavior. A study conducted in ten inner-city public high schools revealed that 22 percent of the student body possessed guns. When asked why, most students attributed their weapon possession to the need to protect themselves (Wilson 1996:61). Violence is so disproportionately present in inner-city neighborhoods that urban kids are more likely than any other group to view violence as simply a way of life (Prothrow-Stith 1991:32).

The combined interactions of these daunting structural forces—inequitable school funding, a severely depressed and neglected urban economy, and high levels of criminal and other destructive social activity—severely circumvent the capacity for providing quality education in urban public schools. To be sure, a viable program of education reform must attend to these serious factors. However, before these structural mechanisms can be effectively uprooted, the ideological basis upon which they are grounded must be uncovered, rooted out, and replaced by a morally sound perspective. The racist ideology that underlies these structural forces is best illuminated by viewing the crisis in urban education in its historical context.

³ For a more detailed analysis of these causal forces, see Wilson 1996.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

From its incipient stages, American public education embodied and institutionalized the principle of racism. Both legal codes and social practices restricting the educational opportunities of black people effectively institutionalized racism, furthering the disparity between white and black political, social, and economic conditions. In the slave-holding South and the non-slave-holding North, blacks were either excluded from schooling altogether, or assigned to segregated schools.⁴ In many Southern states not only were slaves prohibited from attending schools, but schooling was also outlawed for free blacks as well. State legislatures in the South routinely denied the petitions of free blacks for access to public schools. In 1860, at the height of the common schools movement, "only 1.8 percent of the blacks aged five to twenty were in school, this compared to 56 percent of the whites; only about 5 percent of the slave population was literate" (Marcus and Stickney 1981:15).

When blacks were allowed by law to attend a public school, it was almost always a segregated school. However, segregated schools meant inferior schools. In 1859 a New York newspaper reported:

The school houses for whites are in situations where the price of rents is high, and on the buildings themselves no expenditure is spared to make them commodious and elegant. . . . The schools for blacks, on the contrary, are nearly all, if not all, old buildings, generally in filthy and degraded neighborhoods, dark, damp, small and cheerless, safe neither for the morals nor the health of those who are compelled to go to them, if they go anywhere, and calculated rather to repel than to attract them (Marcus and Stickney 1981:13).

The per-pupil spending disparity between white students and black students was enormous. For every dollar spent on a black student in 1859, New York City spent \$1,600 per white student.

After the Civil War, segregated schools became the normative paradigm in both the North and South. In this way, the established racist practice of

⁴ In rare cases, usually in the Northern states, blacks were allowed to attend classes with white students. However, their treatment was usually so abusive that their learning capacity was seriously impaired. See Marcus and Stickney 1981:12.

social segregation for whites and blacks in society at large was extended to separate white and black educational experiences as well. This paradigm provided the structural framework for excluding blacks from the same quality of educational opportunities afforded to most whites. In 1896 the United States Supreme Court, in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, legally institutionalized the system of segregated schooling by ruling that “separate but equal” facilities for blacks and whites were constitutionally permitted. This ruling further ingrained the pattern of inequality between black and white schooling.

It would take almost sixty years after *Plessy v. Ferguson* before the highest court in this land would affirm what African Americans had known and shown for over one hundred years: separate schools were never equal schools. With that landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the issue of inequity in public education was forced onto the agenda and consciousness of the nation. In theory, even if not in practice, this decision revolutionized the structure of public education in this country. It solidified the constitutional right of African Americans in particular, and all Americans in general, to equal educational opportunity.

Nevertheless, in almost half a century after the *Brown* decision, public schools remain highly segregated and grossly unequal. This riddling reality is in large measure due to the enormous resistance of white America to the vision of equal and integrated public schools for black and white children. From the very day that the *Brown* decision was handed down, a day that many white Southerners termed “black Monday,” many whites, in both word and deed, committed themselves to the goal of dismantling and undermining all attempts to enforce the Supreme Court decision. Some Southern states threatened to close schools rather than integrate. In some cases biased and racist admission examinations were instituted to prevent black students from enrolling in white schools. When these and other more covert maneuvers failed, mobs of white Southerners simply took to the streets and became a human barrier to black admission.

Under the pressure of civil rights organizations, the federal government instituted measures such as threatening the loss of federal money to school districts that failed to comply with desegregation laws, and later forced busing strategies to achieve integrated public schools. However, these measures accomplished very little in terms of school integration or equity among black and white pupils. Overwhelming white resistance to school desegre-

gation efforts prevented any real progress from taking place. Often, whites simply moved from the cities to suburban communities, where they could protect themselves from the demands of desegregation in general, and forced busing in particular. With the failure of court-ordered busing and other desegregation mechanisms, the battle for equal educational opportunity lost much of its steam, so that the inequalities highlighted by the *Brown* decision remain entrenched today in America's public school system.

The current tension and disparity between urban and suburban public schooling grows out of this long history of political, social, economic, and educational injustice committed against African Americans. The practice of legally sanctioned segregation as a vehicle for perpetuating racial inequity in public education has been replaced with the de facto segregation created by the concentration of whites in America's suburbs and the concentration of African Americans in urban centers. The political power and influence of white suburbanites enable them to maintain a system of public education that privileges their interests over and against those of the black urban poor. When white Americans left the cities for suburban communities and cities became predominantly black neighborhoods, the level of investment in urban schools plummeted (Anyon 1997:155).

Hence the stark difference between urban and suburban public education that we witness today relies upon structures and practices that are formed and perpetuated based on the ideology of racism. From the "white flight" that created the contemporary predominantly white suburb, to the school funding formula that divides public dollars for education in a way that privileges the private interests of wealthy white suburbanites, to the pattern of neglect that has severed urban communities from opportunities for economic development and political power—the structural forces that perpetuate failure in urban public schools reek with the odor of racist ideology.

The problem with current school reform proposals is that they fail to acknowledge and address the structural and ideological nature of the public school crisis. Educational reformers, social scientists, and politicians vigorously debate both the causes of, and solutions to, this problem. Out of these debates have grown a number of education reform initiatives intended to address this crisis. Some of the major recent trends in school reform fall under the headings of school choice, decentralization, and school restructuring. This paper will address primarily proposals for "school choice," as

this suggestion has gained significant popularity in recent years and it is, in my opinion, one of the most dangerous and deceptive responses to inequity in public education.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL CHOICE INITIATIVES

In the politics of public education, “school choice” has become a code word for reform initiatives intended to empower parents with greater choices about where and how their children are educated. According to school choice proponents, the primary causes of public school failure include stagnant bureaucracy, rigidity, and the limited capacity of parents and concerned persons to force schools to change. Choice initiatives, therefore, empower parents with the capacity to avoid the inadequacies of their local school by placing their children in schools of their choice, using the funding that would normally go to their local neighborhood school. Public schools, then, are subject to the competitive pressures of the “educational marketplace.” Choice proponents believe that, under the pressure of such a system, traditional public schools will either improve or perish.

The two major types of school choice initiatives are educational vouchers and charter schools. Educational vouchers allow parents to use public school funds to pay for their child’s education at a public or private school of their choice. If a school district spends \$5000 per pupil, for example, a parent would be issued a voucher in this amount (or an amount that approximates the school per-pupil expenditure as much as possible) that could be applied to the tuition at a school other than the public school to which the student is normally assigned. Several variations exist within the scope of the voucher concept. Some voucher advocates propose “highly regulated” vouchers that are intended to prevent greater school segregation or to disallow the use of public funds for tuition at religious schools. Others support unregulated voucher systems that would allow all families access to vouchers and would not limit the types of schools eligible to receive voucher funds (La Noue 1972:v).

Charter schools, the more popular choice paradigm, are public, non-sectarian schools that function under a written contract, or charter, from a local or state school board. Charter schools allow local stakeholders, usually parents, community leaders, and teachers, to form alternative public schools in their communities. These charter schools are free from many of the regu-

lations that are binding on traditional public schools. For example, charter schools are sometimes freed from adherence to district-formulated teacher salaries so that they may modify their budgets to increase teacher pay and attract and retain higher quality teachers. Some of the other innovations that charter schools employ include longer school days, strict discipline codes for students, and creative curricula that deviate from the state- and district-mandated instructional practices. In return for greater creative freedom, charter schools are required to set and achieve certain student improvement goals. Usually, after about five years, school charters are reviewed and either renewed or revoked based on demonstrated achievements of the schools' stated goals.

Since Minnesota passed the first charter school legislation in 1991, thirty-six other states have followed suit, creating more than two thousand charter schools serving over 500,000 students (Center for Education Reform 2001). Unlike voucher programs, charter school legislation has enjoyed strong bipartisan support, due largely to the fact that charter schools do not bear the stigma of transferring public funds to private schools. Of course, many opponents of charter schools claim that the per-pupil expenditure that follows students to these charter schools places an undue stress on the already troubled school budgets of traditional schools.

In the last ten years, educational vouchers and charter schools have been suggested as viable remedies to the pattern of failure on the part of traditional public schools to provide adequate educational opportunities to urban students. In the case of vouchers, in particular, there is very limited and often conflicting evidence on the question of whether African American students experience achievement gains in the schools that they attend using private vouchers. In fact, three major studies reveal three different conclusions. A 1995 study of the Milwaukee school choice program determined that "there were no relative achievement gains among the choice students." A 1997 study reported that "students made statistically significant test score gains in both reading and math by their third year." And a more recent study shows that "students selected to attend choice schools experienced significantly faster gains in math scores, but showed no differential in reading" (Rouse 1998:62).

Similarly, charter schools exhibit mixed results in terms of student achievement. In many cases they have reported gains in student test scores. And, across the board, parents of charter school students seem to be pleased with their children's new learning environments. However, there are as many

charter school failure stories as there are success stories. In Michigan, for example, a recent analysis of the state's 138 charter schools showed that charter school students lagged behind students in regular public schools in all subject areas of the state's student achievement exam (MEAP). In other states the evidence shows similar results. As one state Board of Education official put it, "some are doing good work. Some aren't" (Hornbeck 1999:6).

In fairness to charter schools and voucher programs, it should be noted that the question of whether these measures improve student achievement cannot be resolved by the current evidence. To date, the data is simply too inconclusive. I contend, however, that the debate about the issue of school choice has focused too narrowly on the statistical data examining the relationship between achievement and school choice. While the insights gleaned from social science research provide an invaluable resource, the ethical questions surrounding the issue offer a more useful way of framing the debate. To what extent are choice initiatives a viable option for achieving the aim of equity in public education for *all* African Americans and other traditionally oppressed groups? Under the lens of this inquiry, in my view, the inadequacies and limitations of choice initiatives emerge.

Inherently, school choice programs lack the capacity for achieving justice for all or even most students in poor urban communities. They are, at best, band-aid remedies to a broad and systemic problem. While charter schools and educational vouchers may provide a better education for a few African American youth, these programs do not and cannot achieve improved educational opportunities for all or even most black urban students. The limited supply of high quality public and private schools prevents the possibility of significant numbers of black urban youth attending effective charter schools or voucher schools.

Furthermore, voucher programs are voluntary, not mandatory. Schools have the option of accepting or denying these voucher students. In many cases, students with vouchers are declined admission to the voucher schools to which they applied (Johnson, Piana, and Burlingame 2000). By their actions these schools make it clear that they do not intend to open their doors to any significant number of black children from urban neighborhoods. Moreover, history has taught us that parents and school leaders in predominantly white schools are willing to go to great lengths to ensure that black enrollment is kept at a minimum in their schools.

Similarly, charter schools are inherently limited in their capacity to provide true equity. In practically every state there is a legal limit to the num-

ber of charter schools allowed to operate in the state. Thus charter schools (the ones that work) become an elite group of public schools for a few “lucky” students. Unless every school becomes a successful charter school, there is no potential for systemic change via this strategy.

Moreover, the faith that school choice proponents place in the positive effects that choice schools will have on traditional schools is, at best, misguided and, at worst, deliberately deceptive. Unfortunately, the existing evidence is completely inadequate for determining the capacity of competitive market forces to ignite improvement in traditional American public schools. However, a study of school choice policies in New Zealand presents some instructive insights on this question. With more than ten years of school choice experience and data, New Zealand provides a fruitful domain of analysis for assessing the effects of choice and competition on the most troubled schools. The results of the New Zealand study suggest that market competition in schooling has positive effects for a large number of students, but does not solve the educational failure of the “troubled urban schools” (Fiske and Ladd 2000b:208). Even under school choice initiatives, New Zealand minority students in poor urban schools continued to suffer from severe lack of academic achievement.

The theory underlying the New Zealand reform and market-based reforms in the United States holds that schools will become better if they are given operational flexibility and are prodded by the need to compete for students. The troubled urban schools we observed in New Zealand had operational flexibility. They certainly had incentives to offer programs that were attractive to parents and students. And in some cases they were well-managed. Yet still they were unable to compete successfully in the new educational market (Fiske and Ladd 2000a).

Choice ideology, in my view, wrongly assumes that the primary problem is one of bloated bureaucracies and powerful teachers’ unions that stifle teacher creativity and undermine student learning. This logic fails to take seriously the history of political, social, and economic injustices committed against African Americans in particular, and the poor in general. The principles and practices of parental choice and competitive market forces neither intend nor are able to reconfigure the political, social, and economic structures that have created and that perpetuate the contemporary crisis. Greater choice and competition cannot solve the problems of inequitable

school funding formulas, chronic poverty and joblessness, and the political and economic impotence of urban communities vis-à-vis suburban communities that underlie current public educational inequity.

Most importantly, the school choice proposal for education reform contributes to the perpetuation rather than the eradication of the ideology of racism. Rather than insisting upon quality schooling in urban neighborhoods and communities where black children live, choice measures make it incumbent upon black urban families to find effective schools, often outside their local communities. Conversely, white wealthy families are not forced to secure vouchers and go hunting for a good school or to design a charter school for their children. They simply send their children to the neighborhood public school and are able to expect a quality education for their children. A non-racist view of humanity requires that the same convenient and quality option ought to be available for all persons who attend American public schools.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A viable strategy for achieving equity in public education must be informed by an adequate understanding of the ideological and structural nature and scope of the problem and must, therefore, address the matter on these critical levels. Hence any viable solution to the public education crisis will require the repudiation of the racist ideology, and the deconstruction of the racist structures that perpetuate this perverted principle. Ultimately, all Americans must constructively resolve to develop and institute social, political, and economic structures that are grounded in a non-racist view of humanity. To that effect, I offer three general policy directives intended to push forward the development of a more equitable system of public education in this country. These policy-related recommendations are not meant to be conclusive; rather, they are suggestive of the kinds of structural changes that must be made in order to eradicate the racism that currently pervades American public education systems.

Equitable School Funding

Any school reform effort sincerely committed to quality education for all children must seek equity in per-pupil spending among all public schools.

Let us not be naïve; though money is not the only factor necessary for quality schools, money matters. In fact, it matters a lot. Unless urban schools acquire the funds necessary for higher teacher salaries, adequate equipment, early childhood programs and decent facilities, they will never be able to compete with their wealthy suburban counterparts.

A major obstacle in the effort to secure equitable funding for historically under-financed schools is the inconclusive and conflicting evidence regarding the relationship between school expenditures and student achievement. At least since the release of the Coleman report in 1966, there has been a vigorous debate as to whether increased funding leads to increased student achievement. The findings of the Coleman report and other similar studies suggest that public school funding increases yield little, if any, gains in student achievement. These research findings, however, are not without their limitations. These studies, by and large, have defined student achievement generally in terms of standardized test scores (Carr and Krueger 1992:1). Interestingly, when student achievement is measured in terms of post-education earnings, the results differ dramatically. There is a clear connection between school quality, as correlated with school expenditures, and student achievement. In fact, researchers have attributed much of the decrease in the difference between black-white earnings to increased quality of black schooling. Hence increased school funding, while not always easily connected to improved standardized test scores, clearly has positive implications for students' future income (Carr and Krueger 1992:2).

Moreover, despite earlier inconclusive or conflicting evidence, some recent research has substantiated a positive relationship between increased school funding and higher standardized test scores. A January 2001 *New York Times* article cites evidence that equitable school funding does factor heavily in attaining significant student achievement gains for urban students. Texas and Kentucky, two states whose funding formulas were declared unconstitutional in 1989, have made significant progress toward achieving the parity that court orders demanded. In both states, students in poor districts that received these increased funds have made remarkable gains in academic performance. In an urban section of Houston, for example, the percentage of students passing their "end-of-course" tests rose from 50.7 percent in 1994 to 80.6 percent in 2000. The independent research organization that analyzed the data cited the additional money as a significant factor in the student achievement gains (Steinberg 2001:B1). Similar results emerged from a very recent study of the efforts toward school funding equalization in Massachusetts. The researchers found that increased spend-

ing led to increased scores in math, reading, science, and social studies for fourth graders (Guryan 2001:21). Hence, an emerging body of literature seems to be challenging the consensus created by the findings of the Coleman report and other similar studies.

The issue of equalizing school funding, however, is not simply a question of the likelihood of student academic achievement; it is more importantly a matter of profound moral significance. The huge per-pupil spending differences between urban and suburban public schools make a troubling statement about how our society views the worth of human beings. Under this economic paradigm, human worth is drawn primarily along the lines of race and class.

A non-racist view of humanity demands that the equal essential worth of all persons is respected and reflected in the social, political, and economic structures of society. As King's insights suggest, the equal essential worth of all persons is not simply an abstract concept. It is inextricably linked to, and manifested in, the physical realities in which people are forced to live. The disparities in per-pupil spending in wealthy suburban schools and urban poor schools constitute a violation of the equal essential worth of all students. The legal sanctioning of this highly unequal distribution of public education, an essential social good, implies an inequality in American society's judgment about the worth of urban and suburban students. The only way to overcome this perversion in the judgment of human worth is to institute a more equitable system of public school finance that more accurately reflects the truly equal essential worth of all students. Any action short of this objective will only perpetuate the moral depravity underlying the current system of public education in America.

Strengthening Affirmative Action and Civil Rights Measures

The American debate on the issue of equal educational opportunity has always been, and continues to be, inextricably linked to the problem and issue of race in America. Race is the most prominent social factor distinguishing urban school students from suburban school students. The historical development of the racial divide in public education reveals its roots in racist ideology and practices. A useful remedy to the existing inequalities, therefore, must account for and counter the patterns and systems of racism that perpetuate the problem.

After the civil rights movement, affirmative action and other civil rights measures became principal mechanisms for reversing the history of discrimination against African Americans, other minorities, and women. While these measures alone do not have the potential to fully counter racial injustice, they continue to be useful political and legal mechanisms in the struggle for racial justice.

One of the great achievements of affirmative action, in particular, and civil rights legislation, in general, is that they have created in the American consciousness an increased level of awareness of, and sensitivity to, the history and problem of United States racism. Not only have these measures helped to curb actual discrimination, they also have given rise to a moral ethos in which racist practices are viewed with moral condemnation, making it more difficult for individuals and institutions to be comfortable attempting to engage in such practices.

Hence the current trends toward reversing affirmative action and civil rights legislation threaten also to erode American moral consciousness on the matter of race and racism. The moral aim of these race-based initiatives—the realization of racial justice—is critically compromised by the dismantling of those social, political, and economic structures designed to achieve racial justice. The rolling back of affirmative action and other civil rights measures eliminates an important structural deterrent to racist systems and practices, which only feeds and facilitates the kind of racist resistance that opposes racial equity in public education.

In addition to affirmative action, Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides another example of civil rights legislation that needs to be preserved and strengthened as a tool for advancing the struggle for racial justice in public education. The intent of Title I is to provide federal grants to elementary and secondary schools to benefit the schooling of children from low-income families. This measure was created in an attempt to better equalize school funding throughout the United States. However, Title I funds, which amounted to 6.6 billion dollars in 1993, have come under the manipulation of the same political forces that perpetuate the current inequity in school resources. Rather than going solely to school districts in poor communities, these funds are often diverted to less needy schools. In fact, in 1993 approximately 90 percent of all American schools received Title I funds, suggesting that the intended goal of Title I funds is critically undermined by the political maneuvering of wealthier congressional districts. Ironically, Title I funds, which are designed to better equalize school funding across districts and states, are distributed far

more equitably across *all* school districts (including wealthy suburban districts) than the state funding distributions themselves (McUsic 1999:94). Protecting Title I funds from this kind of political manipulation and ensuring their distribution in only the poorest school districts will help in the effort to improve the quality of schooling for the most disadvantaged students.

In recent years, however, programs like affirmative action and Title I have come under severe attack. This opposition takes on various forms. One argument against these measures raises the question of their necessity. Often conservative critics of affirmative action, for example, argue that the race-related legislative and legal advances that have been made since *Brown v. Board of Education* make affirmative action policy initiatives “anachronistic” (Edley 1996:24–25). This view, however, is blind to the history and reality of American racism.

Clearly, the United States is far from achieving the reality of racial justice that affirmative action was intended to achieve. The black unemployment rate remains significantly higher than that among whites. The black median income is more than 25 percent lower than the white median income. Only one in seven white children under the age of six lives below the poverty level, while half the black children in this age range live their lives below the national poverty rate. These disparities are in large measure created and aggravated by the unequal education of black and white students that creates disparate job prospects for them as adults (Edley 1996:42–43).

Some will argue, of course, that these disparities are not necessarily caused by racial discrimination. Hence, in their view the anti-discrimination policies that emerged from the civil rights movement are unnecessary. However, evidence to the contrary discounts the credibility of this claim. As recently as 1996 the federal government was receiving more than 90,000 complaints of work-place discrimination each year. The Urban Institute’s *Employment and Housing Discrimination Studies* found startling patterns in both job and housing discrimination against blacks. In experiments conducted sending black and white job or housing applicants with identical credentials to the same employment or real estate institutions, the Institute found that 20 percent of white applicants advanced higher in the hiring process than an identically qualified black applicant. And in numerous cases realtors told blacks that no housing was available, yet only a day later showed available apartments to white clients with equal qualifications. Furthermore, the Institute’s research revealed that African Americans experience dis-

crimination in “roughly half” of their real estate search encounters (Edley 1996:49).

Even when black-white disparities cannot so easily be traced to such clear instances of racial discrimination, it is impossible to detach the racial divide from its relationship to the United States history of racial segregation and forced slavery. Even those who suggest that racism is not a systemic reality today are forced to admit that the black-white disparity has causal roots in the United States history of racial injustice against black people. Centuries of inhuman treatment cannot be overcome simply by three decades of civil rights legislation. Past practices of racial injustice continue to have crippling effects on the lives of African Americans far removed in time and space from those practices. In a very real way their destinies are constricted by the strains this nation’s history of racism has placed upon them. Hence current generations who continue to benefit from the unjust effects of historically rooted racism in America bear a moral responsibility to rectify these unjust conditions. It is within this frame of reference that the necessity of affirmative action and civil rights measures is clear.

In addition to the argument that denies the necessity of affirmative action, many opponents view these policies as constituting “reverse discrimination” that promotes racial preferences in favor of African Americans and other racial minorities. In this view the morality of such measures is called into question because of the discrimination that it promotes. Yet this perspective is not only guilty of historical amnesia, it is also guided by a myopic ethical vision.

The moral significance of affirmative action is not in the short-term “discrimination” that it involves. Rather the quality of its final aim determines its ethical status. Affirmative action is merely a means to achieve racial justice. Its relationship to the goal of racial justice determines its moral validity. Conversely, the racial discrimination that has created the *need* for affirmative action is undeniably linked to an ignoble telos, namely racial injustice and the perpetuation of white supremacy. Hence those who try to place affirmative action measures on the same moral plane with the racial discrimination that blacks have experienced are grossly mistaken in their moral reasoning because they fail to appreciate the diametrically opposed aims of the discrimination involved in racism versus that involved in affirmative action. Racism distinguishes humanity on the basis of race in order to exalt whites over blacks unjustifiably. Affirmative action distinguishes humanity on the basis of race in order to ensure that the essentially equal

human dignity of all people is respected. To invoke the language of Martin Luther King, Jr., affirmative action and civil rights laws attempt to “uplift human personality”—racism “degrades the human personality” (King 1986:49).

Aggressive Urban Renewal

Finally, as Jean Aynon rightly argues in her book *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform*, improving urban education will necessitate improving the social and economic conditions of the children and families in inner-city communities. As an extension of this claim, she suggests that school-based reform must be coupled with a wider reform and renewal of life in America’s urban centers. This will mean that urban school reform is structured into a larger effort to eliminate the acute poverty and alienation that characterize ghetto communities.

Essentially, there are two basic strands involved in this proposal for the renewal of urban centers. The first is to improve the quality of life for the poor who make up the highest percentage of inner-city dwellers. Second, efforts must be made to attract working- and middle-class Americans of all races back to the cities. These efforts are both interrelated and interdependent. The creation of jobs with livable wages, crime reduction, the construction of affordable and desirable housing, improved city services, access to health care, and the beautification of city homes and buildings are important dimensions to the renewal of city life and the success of city schools.

This two-dimensional approach to urban renewal coheres well with the view of humanity evident in King’s thought. Improving the quality of life for the inner-city poor speaks to the way King’s view of humanity connects the *worth* of the person to the *physical well-being* of the person. In King’s thought, a decent job and a basic level of prosperity are inextricably linked to human dignity. Hence a program of urban renewal that seeks to create the conditions for all persons to have a decent standard of living is a necessary practical extension of the ethical principle of the equal sacred worth of all persons.

Moreover, attracting working- and middle-class families back to the inner city also reflects a natural congruence with King’s view of humanity. First of all, the social, political, and economic implications of achieving this goal bear promising results for the quality of urban life and public educa-

tion. Under the conditions of racial and socio-economic diversity implied by this kind of urban renewal, urban schools would benefit from sharing in the economic and political resources that come with the presence of wealthier families. Moreover, this type of diversity reflects and reinforces the insight inherent in King's notion of the unity of humanity. By creating a context in which the education of the rich is tied up with the education of the poor and the schooling of black students is interdependent with the schooling of white students, we are made more acutely aware of the interrelatedness of all humanity. The separation of students along the lines of race and class betrays the truth of our real connectedness.

To be sure, the social impact of poor schooling has negative repercussions not only for children and families in troubled schools. We all suffer from, and pay for the effects of, the inadequate education of one segment of humanity. The costs of welfare dependency and incarceration, both of which are highly correlated with poor schooling, are only a portion of the costs that all of us absorb as a result of failing schools. A startling 82 percent of all persons in American prisons are high school dropouts. The estimated cost of incarcerating one male prisoner for a year is \$35,000. Some social scientists have suggested that the United States loses \$50 billion a year in earnings due to the high school dropout problem (Anyon 1997:182).

These daunting monetary costs cannot compare, of course, to the loss in human resources and potential that is caused by poor schooling. We will never know the intellectual loss that our nation has suffered as a result of its long and systemic miseducation of black and poor youth. The cure for AIDS may very well be planted in the mind of a little girl in the South Bronx, but it will never emerge because she has not been taught to read and cannot solve a simple math problem. It will take a vigorous renewal of, and reinvestment in, our inner cities to reverse the pattern of substandard schooling that prevents urban youth from fulfilling their potential and contributing fully to our society.

CONCLUSION

The political and economic challenges that confront the struggle for social justice in public education are enormous. Parents in predominantly white suburban communities are afraid that achieving equity for black students will mean that the education of their own children will suffer. Politicians are

afraid that if they talk about real systemic change on this issue they will lose the political support of their powerful suburban constituents. States fear that improving urban public schools will overburden their already dwindling resources. Everyone is aware that these inequalities represent a profound social problem, but these narrow personal and political concerns sap the momentum needed to solve this daunting social ill.

Hope for achieving equity in public education lies in our capacity to convince all the involved constituencies—politicians, wealthy suburban taxpayers, corporations, and urban residents—to encompass a larger concern for *all* school children, not merely their own children and self-interests. In a discussion of the nature of competing social groups, to which he refers as “moral communities,” Peter Paris warns that “human communities have no natural impulse to expand themselves in a morally just way.” Rather, the natural human instinct is to resist expanding one’s moral vision beyond the immediate moral community (Paris 1988:118–19). Widening moral communities comes about only through an active moral commitment to the wider common good. Hence the task of persuading social groups, such as those involved in the debate over education reform, to transcend their understandable, but myopic, self-interests will require cooperative human thought and action that is nurtured by a vision of the common good.

The view of humanity outlined in King’s thought provides a solid foundation for promoting such a commitment to the common good. His view of a *common humanity*, bound together by an equal essential worth, human unity, and freedom, offers a way of understanding the human condition that encourages and even requires a genuine concern for, and commitment to, the good of the other. Within this ethical framework, conflicts such as the public education crisis can be resolved only by formulating a solution that satisfies the needs of all concerned.

Finding this solution is a challenge we must not fail to undertake. Not only are the minds of millions of American youth at stake in this crisis, but the social, economic, and political vitality of the nation’s future also is at stake. Even more significantly, the moral integrity of our nation is on the line. Should we persist in our indifference to, and accommodation with, the “savage inequalities” that characterize the difference between urban and suburban public schooling, we simply perpetuate an ideology of racism and the mistaken view of humanity that it embodies. W. E. B. DuBois once wrote, “the school of today is the world of tomorrow” (1980:53). Our commitment to a better world, a world where racism and injustice are eradicated, is con-

tingent upon our commitment to achieving equal educational opportunities for all children. Hence, the most pressing question of the public education crisis must not be, "How can we afford to make schools work?" but rather, "How can we afford *not* to make schools work?"

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Some Possible Roles for Congregational Christian Education in Closing the Black-White Educational Achievement Gap

SANDRA COSTEN KUNZ

THE EVENING MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS SHOT I WAS AFRAID. MY FAMILY LIVED IN A white neighborhood filled with huge magnolias, bordered on two sides by black neighborhoods—in Memphis. Rumors were flying that the garbage men were going to march from the colored neighborhood to our north, down to the colored neighborhood to the south—and burn everything in between. The night before, I’d watched news clips from King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and I’d been afraid then, too. I was unfamiliar with his African American homiletical style, and I’d heard him as loud and angry—and as threatening.

Several days before, a deacon in my Presbyterian church had explained to me why “winning” the sanitation workers’ strike was so important. “The population is exploding. Natural resources are dwindling. The pie is only so big. The reason white people need to keep colored people in their place isn’t because they’re inferior. It’s because they want to be in our place—and there’s not enough room at the top. Taking care of your own is a God-given instinct. It’s my duty as a Christian parent to ensure that my children get all the advantages I can provide.”

In 1968 white parents in Memphis were afraid of what Martin Luther King was saying. In 2001, suburban parents all over the United States still seem to be afraid of what Martin Luther King said. And many of these parents are members of Christian congregations. In the conclusion of his beautifully crafted paper entitled “Closing the Black-White Achievement Gap: A Public Theology for Public Education Reform,” Ray Owens writes: “Parents in predominantly white suburban communities are afraid—afraid that achieving equity for black students will mean that the education of their

own children will suffer” (28). In this sentence I think Owens has pointed out the greatest stumbling block to educational justice in the United States—fear: fear on the part of the affluent that if we share radically enough to provide educational excellence for “those other children,” there won’t be enough educational resources left to provide educational excellence for our own. Although many suburban Christians would sincerely agree that “Yes, urban education ought to be improved,” few of us are willing to share our financial resources to fund urban education, nor to share our time and energy resources in political advocacy to change educational funding structures. I say “us,” because after years of teaching in urban congregations and schools, I am now immersed in suburban culture, teaching special education and Sunday school in Princeton.

This fear-based scarcity approach to resources, resulting in hoarding, is the opposite of Jesus’ approach of reliance upon abundant divine providence—resulting in generosity. One way to interpret the story of the fall in Genesis is to locate the serpent’s lie in his misrepresentation of God’s desires and motivations. The serpent insinuates that God is afraid that humanity might become like God, as if there’s only a limited amount of the divine nature, and God doesn’t want to share it. The serpent, therefore, portrays the Garden of Eden as a scarcity situation. There’s not enough Godlikeness to spread around, and God is stingy. Therefore Adam and Eve will have to do without Godlikeness unless they sneak behind God’s back and steal it. Jesus deconstructs the serpent’s scarcity scenario. His incarnation teaches us that God desires to share divinity with humankind enough to become enfleshed in our humanity. His object lessons of the miraculous meals flesh out the doctrine of providence—that God has provided so abundantly that the distribution of resources can be a cooperative rather than a competitive venture. The Spirit that Jesus promises fills the assembly gathered in his name with the divine nature in a way that can empower us to undo violent social constructions built upon fear of not having enough, and fear of being harmed in competitive struggles.

I agree wholeheartedly with Owens that de facto segregation driven by local property tax funding of public education causes some of America’s most vulnerable “little ones” to stumble. I am convinced that Christian congregations could lead our society toward a more equitable system—if church members can teach each other to “fear not”—to risk a common life of mutuality, and then model this risk-taking publicly.

REIFICATION AND IDOLATRY IN RACIAL INEQUITIES IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

The Old and New Testaments bear witness to humanity's propensity to re-shape our experience of different portions of creation into idols we imbue with imagined power we teach ourselves to fear. Although I would question parts of their approach,¹ I think Berger and Luckmann's outline of the process of social reification² can shed some light on ways in which American idolatries make educational inequities in the United States seem so intractable. In his book *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy*, James Aho summarizes Berger and Luckmann's definition: " 'Reification' refers to the way in which people perceive their own creations, wrongly or falsely, as things for which they have no responsibility, over which they have no power, and which they passively suffer as victims do their fate."³ I see at least six processes of reification (or social construction—or idolatry) that condition the black-white academic achievement gap. All, I believe, involve masking or projecting fear. These are:

- 1) constructing the racial other as invisible. Ralph Ellison's novel *The Invisible Man*⁴ illustrates this process brilliantly.
- 2) constructing the other as enemy. Aho outlines this process in the first half of *This Thing of Darkness*, drawing significantly upon Levinas.
- 3) constructing the disparity between black and white academic achievement as an insoluble mystery, rather than as the result of multigenerational lack of equal access to social and economic capital.
- 4) constructing academic problems in black students as the result of genealogical differences or character defects.
- 5) constructing the resources of suburban school districts and churches as being too overstressed to contribute to the positive transformation of urban education.

¹ Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg's remarks in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 403–7.

² Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday-Anchor, 1967).

³ James Aho, *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 27.

⁴ Ralph Waldo Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

6) constructing the efforts of suburban churches to address this problem as being either tokenism or patriarchalism so that one can insist: "This is a problem that we need to give urban black churches the space to address on their own."

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, CONGREGATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES, AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF RACIST IDOLS

I was asked by the editors of *Koinonia* to respond to Owens out of my experience teaching in urban and suburban schools. But I was also asked to respond as a practical theologian. My formation as a practical theologian has been greatly shaped by James E. Loder, a Christian educator whose death this fall has been a great loss to the field. I've been shaped not only by his theoretical depth and pedagogical wisdom, but probably more than anything by his prayers at the beginning of our doctoral seminars. Almost invariably these prayers began, "We are so profoundly grateful for your generosity . . ." and ended with an invocation of the Holy Spirit to empower us for transformative learning and teaching—prayers grounded in the doctrines of providence, incarnation, and the Holy Spirit—and in a passionate conviction that these teachings are transformatively true. Dr. Loder's "transformational model" of practical theology insists that the core problematic of the discipline involves "combining two incongruent, qualitatively distinct realities, the Divine and the human, in apparently congruent forms of action."⁵ Practical theologians work best, I think, when they focus on this divine-human congruence, that is, when they explicitly ask the question: "How might humans act in partnership with what God is doing, here and now, in this particular situation?" It's a question that takes a lot of gall to ask. It takes even more gall to assume that a group might be graced with answers, because the question presumes that collectively we can—partially, brokenly—discern the mission of God in our unique context.

During the first half of the twentieth century George Albert Coe, one of the leaders of the "new" academic discipline of religious education, argued

⁵ James E. Loder, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: 'The Interdisciplinary Issue'" in *Practical Theology: International Perspectives*, ed. Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes van der Ven (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 374.

tirelessly that Sunday Schools and other congregational Christian education programs should teach toward social transformation. He urged church members to support nonchurch reform movements seeking to make public schools more egalitarian and more conducive to broad-based participatory democracy.⁶ I think his chapter entitled “The Aims of Christian Education” speaks to the current black-white educational gap when he insists that “thinking upon ethical problems, and upon the will of God, in terms of social causes and effects belongs within Christian teaching [W]hat should we do with a social order that stunts multitudes of human lives for the sake of money, and does it, not by disobedience to the laws of the state, but under the protection of laws and of courts? How can we really believe in human brotherhood if we are willing to acquiesce in a stratification of society . . . ?”⁷

Unfortunately, Coe’s passion for social justice in public schools was filtered through what I see as an inadequate doctrine of sin, and an inadequate doctrine of God which emphasizes neither God’s transcendent, critical “otherness” over against the current social order, nor God’s immanent, transformative, guiding presence within the church through the action of the Holy Spirit. His inadequate eschatology seems to confuse the expansion of liberal democracy with the spread of the kingdom of God. He created what I see as a false dichotomy between “transmission” models of Christian education (which emphasize passing on biblical and doctrinal teachings) and “progressive” models (which emphasize learning to think critically, make ethical decisions, and then implement them—all in a cooperative manner). Although Coe, who occupied a chair in practical theology for a decade at Union Seminary in New York, envisioned Christian education as socially transformative, his inadequate response to what Loder poses as the “chief problematic of practical theology” (the quest for theories and practices of congruence between divine and human action) drained power from his efforts. It is my conviction that it is the church’s rootedness within the

⁶ I am drawing heavily here upon a chapter by Richard R. Osmer on the religious education reforms in the early twentieth century, to be published by Erdmanns in a book he coauthored with Friedrich Schweitzer about religious education in Germany and the United States.

⁷ George Albert Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928), 54–55.

cultural “otherness” of the Christian Scriptures’ witness to the mission of God in history that can give us the critical perspectival distance we need to see what is actually going on in our culture. And it is our rootedness within the “nearness” of the actual presence and cooperative action of the three persons of God within the assembled church that can empower us to discern cooperatively—and act cooperatively—in congruence with the mission of God.

Both sides in America’s current war against terrorism have made claims to be fulfilling God’s mission. But the ease with which people can mistakenly and destructively claim to be doing God’s work should not (I think) lead us to fearfully abandon all attempts at ecclesial discernment. I’m convinced that part of the core mission of the church is to retell the story of Jesus’ actions and, in the light of that story, and with a reliance upon the Spirit’s guidance, to discern what actions God is leading the church to take to continue Jesus’ mission, knowing that at any point our sin or frailty can confuse us. When I try to respond to Owens’ paper as a practical theologian working in Christian education, I can’t avoid focusing on two questions whose answers, I think, involve spiritual discernment:

1) What educational practices might help congregations, especially affluent congregations, let go of their fear of sharing—that is, let go enough to desire to respond to educational inequities generously?

2) If congregations do desire to work sacrificially in public education, where might they find the power? The power, first, to stick with the messiness of a mutual discernment process until they reach agreement as to what actions might be congruent with what God is doing in their local context, and, then, the power to persist in these actions when they don’t meet with immediate success?

It seems to me that congregations might lose some of their fear, and find more power for social change, by reviving and/or strengthening four educational practices taught and modeled in a variety of New Testament texts.⁸

⁸ I owe a great deal to Richard Osmer’s forthcoming book on the teaching ministry of congregations (Westminster/John Knox) for pointing out how Paul’s epistles both 1) bear testimony to the apostle’s assumption that the practices of catechesis, discernment and exhortation were an ongoing part of congregational life and 2) give further instruction and modeling for how to engage in these practices more faithfully. A fruitful extension of Osmer’s work might be looking at these practices in the pedagogy of Jesus in the gospels. I have adapted Osmer’s schema of the

I doubt I would ever feel comfortable constructing a list of definitive practices of the church, educational or otherwise. But I think congregations seeking the power to deconstruct idolatrous social realities and belief systems would do well to practice these four: 1) mutual retelling and rehearing the story of Jesus, 2) mutual discernment and decision-making, 3) mutual encouragement and 4) mutual forgiveness.

1) *Mutual retelling and rehearing the story of Jesus* via word, sacrament, and countless other ways reminds congregations not only that confronting structural evil inevitably involves great cost, but that God can bring victorious transformation through such expenditure. Retelling Jesus' parables and other teachings schools us in the agenda of God. A Christology that emphasizes the unique authority of Jesus' ethical teachings and redemptive work is crucial, I think, if one is to interpret the gospels in a way that supports long-term political advocacy.

2) *Mutual discernment* involves making corporate decisions in the light of this story, with a reliance upon the guidance of God's Spirit. Group decision-making often involves patience-grinding hours of listening and sifting, patience that can be sustained only, I believe, if the congregation is also practicing mutual encouragement. Robert Putnam opens his chapter on "Democracy" in *Bowling Alone* with Oscar Wilde's quip: "The trouble with socialism is that it takes too many evenings."⁹ For too many of us in suburban churches, so would a process of spiritual discernment aimed toward social justice. Perhaps it would help if our ecclesiology took more seriously the political implications of the choice of the word *ekklesia* to describe the fellowship gathered around Jesus in the New Testament. As feminist theologians have pointed out,¹⁰ the *ekklesia* in Athens were the free males empowered with making public policy decisions on behalf of the entire commu-

three core practices of Christian education and have added forgiveness as a separate fourth practice. My vision of the breadth of pedagogical practices that can foster Christian growth in both congregations and in the academy was enlarged by the "Introduction to Christian Education" course at Princeton Theological Seminary cotaught by Profs. Osmer and Kenda Creasy Dean in 1999.

⁹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 336.

¹⁰ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza in her 1996 Women in Church and Ministry lecture at Princeton Theological Seminary.

nity. Jesus invites everyone—regardless of gender or status—into the *ekklesia* of God. Would that congregations could take seriously the potential power of their mutual decisions and political action for transforming their communities, and make those decisions in a way that listens responsively to all the voices within that community. Various models for ecclesiastical spiritual discernment can be found in the Ignatian, Quaker, and Anabaptist traditions—and in the contemporary works of Episcopalian Suzanne G. Farnham.¹¹

3) *Mutual encouragement* involves good food and good singing—and all other practices which nurture the courage to grow morally and respond to suffering with wisdom. Important examples are small group prayer and Bible study meetings, and relationships of mutual accountability.¹² I am talking about a level of accountability greater than that seen in many “self-help groups,” which Robert Wuthnow describes all too accurately when he writes: “Some small groups merely provide occasions for individuals to focus on themselves in the presence of others. The social contract binding the members together asserts only the weakest of obligations.”¹³ Our obligations to each other in the body of Christ are measured, and forgiven, by the cost of Jesus’ death. We owe each other the debt of love.

4) *Mutual forgiveness* can keep this love alive. When combined with confession, it can keep trust from completely unraveling when it is damaged by the inevitable individual sins and corporate failures within a congregation, particularly the failure to see quick results from political advocacy. Hard-learned trust in the effectiveness of mutual forgiveness can shape a congregation’s compassionate response to social evils outside as well as inside its own membership.

¹¹ Esp. *Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1999).

¹² Thomas H. Groome’s *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Vision and Story* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980) and Daniel S. Schipani’s *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988) offer models for small-group praxis-oriented Christian education.

¹³ Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America’s New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 6. Wuthnow’s guidance of the Center for the Study of American Religion’s workshops increased my hope in the possibility of truly pluralistic public education and scholarly discussion that values the distinctiveness and contributions of different religious viewpoints.

When done in humble congruence with divine mercy, these four practices have the potential for teaching us to “fear not”: to risk nondefensive sharing and political action in line with Jesus’ teachings. I’ve been convinced of these practices’ value for social transformation since I was immersed in Anabaptist communal ecclesiology in the seventies.¹⁴ My current hope about their potential for public practical theology owes a great deal to the work of Dorothy Bass, Craig Dykstra, L. Greg Jones, and Miroslav Volf;¹⁵ the base community movement in Latin America; and to the practice of confession in African churches and of testimony in African American churches.

Ray Owens writes, “Hope for achieving equity in public education lies in our capacity to convince all the involved constituencies . . . to encompass a larger concern for all school children, not merely their own. . . .” (28). He offers “the view of humanity outlined in King’s thought” as a “solid foundation for promoting such commitment to the common good” (28). King’s translation of Jesus’ anthropology into terminology that can be used in non-Christian contexts is brilliant. But as important as King’s theories were to the civil rights movement, I think that the primary source of its power “to convince involved constituencies” was the incarnation of Jesus’ anthropology in African American *congregations*—who retold the story of Jesus and at their best practiced mutual discernment, encouragement, and forgiveness. And in performing these practices in Jesus’ name, the disempowered learned to take political risks—together.

These four practices of congregational self-education could help restructure public education today because they can nurture communities with enough grit, social capital, and openness to grace to support political advocacy over the tedious long haul. Ugly church politics and ugly school board

¹⁴ At Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston, Illinois.

¹⁵ Especially Bass and Dykstra’s *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), Dykstra’s *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1999), Jones’s *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), and Volf’s *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996)—all of which include some response to Alasdair MacIntyre’s neo-Aristotelean thoughts on social practices. I discovered *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), edited by Volf and Bass, after this response was initially delivered. Dykstra and Bass’s, Jones’s, Volf’s, and especially Nancy E. Bedford’s chapters are quite pertinent.

politics look and feel a lot alike. Church members who have learned that the time invested in responsive, inclusive decision-making eventually pays off in more joy-filled church policies could enter into the fray of public education policy-making with greater patience—and hope. Owens notes: “According to school choice proponents, the primary causes of public school failure include stagnant bureaucracy, rigidity, and the limited capacity of parents and concerned people to force schools to change” (16). Bigness is often blamed. Experiences of being shut out of the decision-making process—which lead people to assume that change can only be “forced”—are also blamed. But if large parochial systems can maintain a sense of face-to-face local control, and some do, so can large public school districts, I think. Some parochial and charter schools have demonstrated that ongoing responsiveness to parents and other community members can reduce per-pupil expenditures—and administrative blood pressures. Congregations whose public advocacy makes them visible in the community could model, to all the players in school conflicts, that responsive mutual decision-making works.

SOME PERSONAL OPINIONS ABOUT URBAN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The following five opinions should be taken with a grain of salt, as the rather thin, individual perspectives of one public schoolteacher, and not as the thicker and more powerful conclusions of mutual spiritual discernment in a congregation. First, I think that in some urban districts some charter schools are playing a useful stopgap role, but not by offering competition, as some insist. They can be most helpful, I think, if they focus on offering hope-filled alternative models of urban education, and if their charter includes a timeline for rejoining and renewing their local district’s administrative structure. Clearly—despite the best intentions of urban charter school administrators, teachers, and parents—charter schools are unfortunately functioning in a role of educational tokenism, providing a false rationale for continued underfunding of urban public districts. I would like to see this role phased out, and the incredible dedication of much of the urban charter school movement directed into educational channels that can benefit more students. But I have a great deal of respect for congregations who have prayerfully discerned that in their local context they are called to

support charter schools or nonpublic schools rooted in a particular religious tradition. And I also have great respect for parents who believe that it is part of their children's vocation (and part of their own) to be salt and light in public schools.

Second, I'm wary of vouchers, not only because they could weaken the financial base of public schools, but because they could weaken the independence of independent schools. I agree with Owens that "greater choice and competition cannot solve the problem of inequitable school funding formulas" (19–20).

Third, I agree with Owens that strengthening affirmative action and civil rights measures are important for moving the United States toward educational equity. And I also agree with him that aggressive urban renewal can improve the educational tax base of cities. This is an area in which I see great potential for creating partnerships between urban and suburban congregations.

Fourth, I doubt President Bush's initial "school accountability" proposal could solve the problem of racist educational inequities, with its plan to cut Title I funds to districts not showing enough test score improvement. I do not believe standardized test scores accurately measure excellence in either teaching or learning. I agree with Whitworth professor Gregory Fritzberg that "the vast majority of educators serving in high poverty areas deserve our support rather than the threat of fiscal abandonment."¹⁶

Fifth, I also agree with Fritzberg that the legislation based on "opportunity-to-learn standards" models—legislation defeated at the federal level in the mid-nineties—still offers creative ideas which could move the United States toward just distribution of educational goods. The ethical reasoning behind most "opportunity-to-learn" proposals is that: 1) all public school students, either on a state or a national level, should have access to high quality educational resources such as instructional materials, libraries, laboratories, athletic facilities, appropriate class size, and, most of all, to well-trained and well-prepared administrators and teachers—and 2) that educational funding should be readjusted to provide these resources to all schools.¹⁷

¹⁶ Gregory Fritzberg, "No Shortcuts to Excellence," *Sojourners* 30, 3 May–June 2001, 18.

¹⁷ Gregory Fritzberg, *In the Shadow of "Excellence": Recovering a Vision of Educational Opportunity for All* (San Francisco: Caddo Gap Press, 1999), chaps. 4–5.

CONCLUSION

These personal, individual opinions of mine listed above have no power to change current educational inequities. One of the reasons Martin Luther King functioned so powerfully as a public practical theologian was because he taught Jesus' ethics of the inbreaking reign of God to *congregations*—and taught them in a way that inspired these congregations toward political actions congruent with what they had discerned to be the mission of God in their particular context. Contemporary Christian educators can nurture such risk-taking, I think, by supporting congregations in learning corporate Christian practices that build a more closely-knit, and thus more risk-filled, common life. But this riskier sort of common life also has the potential for being filled with more transformative power for good—and with more joy.

Justice, Pluralism, and School Choice: A Response to Ray Owens

CHRISTOPHER S. D. ROGERS

RESPONDING TO MR. OWENS' ESSAY, I FIND MYSELF IN A RATHER ODD POSITION. THE peculiarity of the situation grows from the fact that there is very little in his essay with which to disagree. His theological exposition, analysis of the racist history of common schooling, condemnation of school funding practices, and well articulated "general policy directives" contain little with which to disagree. I must nevertheless oppose his views on school choice initiatives and—interestingly enough—do so under the same rubric as several of his suppositions and arguments. Hence, it is perplexing that we can agree on so much and yet take this underlying agreement in such disparate public policy directions relative to educational vouchers and charter schools.¹

AREAS OF AGREEMENT AND SUPPORT

Mr. Owens is correct in calling the current inequalities in public education both a moral and a theological problem, in addition to a social problem. The unequal and unjust distribution of opportunity and education has underlying values that do not reflect a Christian concept of personhood, an ethical concept of personhood, or a Christian understanding of society and community. In this vein, Mr. Owens' use of Martin Luther King, Jr., as a

¹ It should be noted that my son attends a charter school. Several factors contributed to this decision, including greater diversity in the student body, abundant parental interest and involvement rates, smaller class sizes, innovative programs, and a focused curriculum around science, math, and ecology.

theological, ethical, and political resource is profound, enlightening, and appropriate.

Moreover, I find supporting and complementary thought from one of my primary theological influences, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Complementary to King, Bonhoeffer does not attempt to identify the image of God with any relation in-and-of-ourselves to God's being; rather, the image of God consists in the relationship of human beings to God and hence to one another. Our humanity and reflection of God's image is truly to be found in interrelationship (Bonhoeffer 1997:64f.).

This Christian concept of personhood has moral implications for the ethical concept of personhood. Because the image of God is in relationship, Bonhoeffer posits, "the ethical concept of the person is a definition based on ethical-social interaction" (Bonhoeffer 1998:50). Indeed, Bonhoeffer goes so far as to say that "the person exists always and only in ethical responsibility" (Bonhoeffer 1998:48). From and with God, we are "freed for the other," and called to express our Christian faith in community and solidarity with others.

Mr. Owens is also accurate in pointing out the tremendous inequality of American public education. Our public schools are failing to meet the needs of those whose needs are greatest. Our current (unjust) system of school financing means that "money shapes the student composition of most public schools, not because the schools' services are free but because one may have to pay an often substantial premium (in the form of investment in real estate) to join the community that a desired school restrictively serves. Family wealth thus controls access to 'public schools'" (Sizer 1997:35). This situation results in schools that are profoundly segregated by social class, race, and ethnicity.

Benjamin Barber gives sad, yet poetic emphasis to Mr. Owens' point when he writes:

It is easy enough to explain the continuing assault on America's children that passes as education policy nowadays: kids are politically invisible—without significant power—and their public schools are no longer regarded as "ours" because they are predominantly nonwhite, peopled by the "invisible children" of the Invisible Man. Even so, putting the moral issue aside, it is hard to comprehend how a tough-minded, realist nation can be so short sighted. The alternatives to focusing on schools are so much more costly—and grim (Barber 1997:21).

There is also, however, another persistent problem within the history of the American common school movement that—I believe—should also be brought forward in this forum—particularly because it helped influence my decision to provide limited support to various school choice initiatives. Though it is certainly no longer the case that public education seeks to, in the words of eighteenth-century common school advocate Benjamin Rush, “convert men into republican machines,” by “render[ing] the mass of people more homogeneous” (Rush 1965:17–18), we must nevertheless recognize that many “public schools” continue to devalue cultural differences and seek to assimilate students as quickly as possible into “American” culture. Again, though not as serious today as in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American public education retains a narrow view of multiculturalism, relying heavily on a prevailing Euro-American, Protestant worldview.

Due to many of the factors discussed in Mr. Owens’ paper, it is fallacious to assume that government-run schools are more integrated racially, culturally, and socio-economically than many private and religious institutions; and, it is certainly difficult to maintain that government-run schools nurture cultural differences more than many private institutions or charter schools. The English-only initiatives found in California and Texas offer only one example of a continuing assimilationist attitude in public education.

Charter schools can provide flexible learning environments tied to the community that avoids the assimilationist attitude of many traditional public schools. For example, in my son’s school district, the Eastside Multicultural Charter School of Tampa Bay uses a multicultural curriculum to teach students from low-income families. Opened in 1997, it was envisioned by three church members who wanted to find a better way to educate local children. It has recently received a five- to fifteen-year charter renewal due to its success.

AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT AND DIFFERENCE

Our current system of education sounds every alarm of injustice. Contrary to Mr. Owens, the demand that any system of education be just provides rationale for embracing a limited system of vouchers and choice. As Peter Paris astutely notes, usually the sufferers of injustice break the silence with their voices and disturb our peace. He notes further that those who make these claims on us “alone are the bearers of constructive social change. . . .

Their demands are always empirically based, and they struggle for dignity and freedom” (Paris 1988:120–21).

By far the most compelling evidence in favor of school choice initiatives is the failure of traditional public schools to provide low-income citizens with the intellectual and civic tools needed for a decent life. It was the clamor of injustice and the vocal support of many low-income families for vouchers, charter schools, or public school choice that caused me to reconsider my initial strong objections to these programs.

Currently, minority families are the strongest supporters of charter schools and voucher programs and, according to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies—a Washington-based think tank devoted to black issues—this support continues to grow. Surprisingly, a full 85 percent of minorities surveyed support school vouchers. There is also a significant and growing bipartisan group of minority community leaders, educators, and politicians who are becoming outspoken advocates for the cause of school vouchers.

To be clear, there is certainly not a consensus on this issue in any minority community. Many people in (especially) the black community believe that vouchers are “exploitative,” or that vouchers are little more than “a concept of exclusion and selective opportunity” (Kweisi Mfume). Linda Darling-Hammond, whose work on this issue I respect greatly, is a vocal opponent of school vouchers, calling them “a smokescreen to avoid tackling the real equity issue” (Hammond 1996:1).

Nevertheless, I found far more well articulated minority support than dissent. When people like Howard Fuller—the black former superintendent of Milwaukee’s *public* schools—stand against the teachers’ unions and turn the class issue back onto the left, school choice proponents can no longer responsibly be portrayed as radicals. Fuller, speaking of former President Clinton’s opposition to the Washington, D.C., voucher program, joined a growing chorus and pulled no punches when he said, “It’s about giving poor people choices, the choices that people with money can make every day. Bill Clinton can decide to send Chelsea to private schools because he has the money. And then he says to the poor parents in Washington—who are stuck with the same schools he wouldn’t send his daughter to—that they have no way out” (Freedman 1997:3).

Though in no way wanting to co-opt Dr. King’s views for this argument, when reading Mr. Owens’ discussion of freedom and destiny, I was struck that the freedom to select a school that is in the child’s best interest is a pow-

erful way of preventing destiny from becoming determinism—or fatalism. As one parent of a school voucher student said, “I was tired of being taken advantage of by public schools and tired of having the door closed in my face. Kids and families are now viewed as consumers.”²

Mr. Owens overstates his case when he argues that suggestions from school choice proponents that choice schools might positively effect other public schools “is, at best, misguided and, at worst, deliberately deceptive.” Though insufficient empirical data exist to state with certainty whether school choice initiatives improve student achievement, or whether voucher and charter school programs increase stratification and segregation, two well-documented aspects of the Milwaukee voucher program warrant specific attention.

First, parental and student approval ratings are very high. The majority of parents surveyed indicated that they are largely unconcerned with the outcome of the empirical studies and are highly satisfied with the program that exists. From the perspective of many of Milwaukee’s low-income participants, the burden of proof now rests on those who oppose the voucher plan.

Second, voucher proponents, critics, and public school administrators alike recognize and acknowledge that Milwaukee’s traditional public schools are improving. After the school choice program was expanded by the Wisconsin legislature in 1995, the Milwaukee school district instituted a number of reform measures, including implementation of new graduation standards, opening seven new “innovative schools,” closing ten of the worst-performing public schools and reopening them with new principals and staffs, and loosening the central bureaucracy—returning more power to the local principles, teachers, and schools. Moreover, study has shown that public school districts that include charter schools have changed educational offerings to meet the needs of the community and have increased their public relations.

Clearly, general agreement that Milwaukee’s public schools are improving does not demonstrate a necessary cause and effect relationship between school vouchers and public school performance. At the very least, however, such statistics do challenge the notion that school choice will necessarily

² Quoted in “Milwaukee’s Voucher Grade is Unclear,” *St. Petersburg Times*, October 20, 1998.

harm traditional public schools or that suggesting a positive correlation is necessarily “misguided” or “deceptive.”

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Depending on one’s point of view, I am either weighted down or lifted up by the theological and political realism of Reinhold Niebuhr—by the “limits and possibilities” of history and our current times. In many ways, this response to Mr. Owens’ position has a pragmatic intent. Even before the events of September 11, funding for issues such as education, urban renewal, and opportunity programs was meager. After September 11, the situation will grow increasingly worse. In my home state of Florida, the local National Public Radio station recently reported that “even classroom spending will not be spared the budget knife in 2002.” There is increasing agreement that American monetary assistance for domestic and international support of programs for low-income and poor communities and countries is likely to take a hit because of the slowing economy, reduced tax revenues, and monies that will be redirected towards security measures.

Unfortunately, the latent, though persistent, class and racial bias that permeates American public policy and American political life will mean that those whom William Julius Wilson calls the “truly disadvantaged” will be at the greatest risk. As I have indicated elsewhere, the unjust relationship of money and political influence in our country will mean that we will increasingly have to address the issue of public schools on multiple fronts. I wholeheartedly support a continuing and unrelenting focus on the systemic issues identified by Mr. Owens, particularly the inequity of public school funding and the underlying taint of racist reinforcement.

At the same time, we need to be pragmatic and work to seize the opportunities of the current political landscape. School choice programs, decentralization, school restructuring—all of these are areas that can help or hinder progress in educational reform. Standing as a bulwark against such programs is unlikely to produce any sustained benefits. Neither should we throw our uncritical support behind a massive, unproven restructuring of our public schools towards a “market mindset.” Rather, charter schools and school vouchers offer one form of viable progress in educational equity, which should not be dismissed at the outset, but rather explored to their full potential.

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Response to Mr. Owens' Paper

MICAH WATSON

IN HIS CELEBRATED WORK *AFTER VIRTUE*, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER ALASDAIR MacIntyre articulates an Aristotelian ethical framework that he claims makes sense of the incommensurable moral language used in contemporary culture wars. This framework is made up of three elements that are integral to a moral political scheme: an understanding of human nature as it is, a vision of human nature as it is to be, and the means by which men and women pass from one state to the other. The understanding of human-nature-as-it-is is informed by our conception of human origin and value. Human-nature-as-it-is-to-be involves for MacIntyre an enduring commitment to a *teleology*, the belief that there are proper ends to which we are called to aspire. Finally, ethics are those moral rules that help us navigate our way from human nature as we find it to the fulfillment of our human teleology. Only by situating our ethics between what we are and what we are to be can we make sense of moral rules and language.

While MacIntyre wrote *After Virtue* to criticize certain Enlightenment philosophical projects and call for a renewed defense of more traditional ethics, his formulation is sufficiently broad to allow other readings and adaptations. In this first section I will apply MacIntyre's framework to Ray Owens' paper, which, from an African American Christian perspective, offers an articulation of human nature as it is, human nature as it is to be, and the ethics that will help us make the transition from one to the other. However, though I find Mr. Owens' formulation of Martin Luther King's ethical system helpful, I will use the case of vouchers and charter schools to suggest that while Owens is persuasive in his articulation of ends (human nature as it should be), he is not as successful in his ethical pronouncements linking ends to means. Finally, I will briefly address Mr. Owens' argumentative strategy regarding his intended audience and question his framing of the urban public education crisis entirely in terms of racism.¹

¹ On the third page Mr. Owens acknowledges that other factors besides race play

IMAGO DEI AND THE QUESTION OF VALUE

In the paper's articulation of Martin Luther King's concept of the *imago dei* we find a powerful expression of what it is to be human as well as a conception that gives enormous dignity and value to the human person. In a religion that posits an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God, it is difficult to imagine a higher compliment than the creation of humanity in God's image and the event of the Incarnation.

Given this conception of human-nature-as-it-is, Mr. Owens' three conclusions based out of King's thought about human nature follow quite nicely. First, men and women have inestimable value. Second, this value is realized in large part through relationships with each other. We are unified in our common heritage as beings created by God and we can with Aristotle agree that one who lives estranged from community is either a god or a beast. Finally, we find some affinity to God's freedom in our own ability to deliberate, make decisions, and exhibit responsibility in our decision-making. This conception of human nature, with perhaps an implied notion of the sinful nature that makes pathologies like racism possible, provides us with a workable foundation with which to begin thinking about ethics in general and inequalities in education in particular. The question remains as to what sort of telos Mr. Owens' provides us with in his paper.

While not as explicit as his description of King's Christian anthropology, there is definitely an identifiable intermediate telos to be found in Mr. Owens' work. I write intermediate because most Christian thinkers who care to express themselves in teleological terms refer to our ultimate telos in terms of an eventual consummation of our relationship with God. Whether this is described in Catholic terms as the Beatific Vision or as in the Westminster Confession's assertion that the chief end of man is to know God and enjoy Him forever, Christianity has attempted to replace Aristotle's eudemonia with some version of eternal relationship with God as humanity's ultimate telos.

Nevertheless, part of achieving that telos of relationship with God requires the exercising of Mr. Owens' third capacity from our identity as *imago dei*, namely freedom. As Owens and others writing about these subjects have

into the debate on urban education. Despite this caveat, however, he never returns to these other factors and in effect claims that race is the fundamental paradigm from which to approach this issue.

made poignantly and painfully clear, the damage that is done to young persons already facing formidable challenges by denying them a quality education is devastating and often irreversible. Thus we can find in Mr. Owens' paper an articulation that a necessary though not sufficient component of achieving one's telos, whether explicitly Christian or otherwise, includes what he calls the "core characteristics of humanity—equal worth, unity, and freedom" as applied to our system of education.

This application of core principles, together with an understanding of what comprises human nature, is the arena wherein ethical judgments can coherently take place. In the abstract ethics are not impossibly difficult, particularly as in this case when a clear, compelling human anthropology is coupled with a believable and achievable human telos. Nevertheless, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details, and it is in the business of appraising the means of achieving human goods that difficulties most often arise. One useful lens through which to look at this problem is with the teleological language of ends and means.

ENDS AND MEANS

Despite the sordid racial history of our own society, one aspect of Mr. Owens' paper highlights a partial success for racial equality and justice. That is, Mr. Owens' articulation of human nature and his call for racial equality are no longer controversial in its abstract formulation. While this may seem like small comfort, it was not too long ago that academic theories contesting the moral and scientific arguments behind racial equality were commonplace. Books like *The Bell Curve* notwithstanding, it is no longer acceptable in public discourse to promote inequality as such.

Yet from the point of view of those who see themselves fighting an institutional racism, this is a hollow victory. The racism that was formerly overt has merely changed its tactics and is now more difficult to identify. What overall acceptance of racial equality indicates is that in the current racial atmosphere arguments have shifted from debates about ends to debates about means. No one should be considered a legitimate voice in public discourse about education who denies the serious inequalities and injustices reflected by the plight of our urban schools. The problems highlighted by Mr. Owens' paper regarding inner-city school funding, decrepit school fa-

cilities, and difficult urban social factors are not reasonably denied. Nor is Mr. Owens' historically justified linkage between our country's racial history and the economic and education quandary in which many African Americans find themselves.

There are, however, facets of the paper that are much more contestable, and of course one need not be a closeted racist in order to contest them. In the remaining sections of this essay I offer some critical comments in the hopes that by evaluating some of the arguments regarding Mr. Owens' means and argumentative strategy, we can more clearly ascertain how to achieve the ends of racial equality and educational excellence.

A conceptual weakness of the paper is directly related to one of Mr. Owens' strengths. In his well-meaning attempt to make as robust a case as possible for eliminating injustice in inner-city education, it may be that Mr. Owens tries to do too many things. In addition to his laudable exposition of Martin Luther King's theology and anthropology, one finds in Mr. Owens' work sections describing the structural and social ills of urban life, the *historical* roots of racism in education, the *contemporary* manifestation of racism in education, the links between school funding and educational achievement, the continued need for affirmative action programs, the prospects of urban renewal, and not least important, an empirical, ethical, and comparative look at school choice. Mr. Owens' writings on these different subjects are also accompanied by an under-articulated view of an inherently racist America that too easily divides the country into wealthy, white suburbanites interested only in protecting their own children and perpetuating racism, and their inner-city minority victims.

This is not to say that these various sections are unimportant, indeed some of them are integral to Mr. Owens' larger project. However there is so much going on and so many assumptions that have been left undefended in order to move on to the next point that the paper's primary purpose, as I understand it, is obscured amidst a host of issues that are not integral to the goal of achieving educational equality for inner-city youth. This is not the place nor am I the writer to respond to many of Mr. Owens' claims and arguments. Nonetheless, using Mr. Owens' own reasoning, I intend to examine in closer detail what I perceive to be a serious defect in Mr. Owens' treatment of school choice. This defect exposes a potentially significant obstacle to the success of the project Mr. Owens encourages us to make our own.

THE ETHICS OF SCHOOL CHOICE

Mr. Owens rightly identifies vouchers and charter schools as two of the most prominent, and controversial, solutions offered to our nation's educational ills. In his empirical appraisal of whether vouchers and charter schools have been successful in improving student achievement, he makes two very significant admissions.² The first admission is that the jury is still out on whether vouchers and charter schools work in achieving their goals and the second admission is that "across the board" parents of charter school children are happy with the programs their children are in. The next move Mr. Owens makes is important. Because the data are inconclusive empirically, Mr. Owens argues that school choice must be evaluated and ultimately rejected on an ethical basis.

This then implies that there is something morally wrong with the approach of school vouchers and charter schools. How does Mr. Owens support this claim? His argument is that school choice is "inherently" unable to achieve educational equality for all African Americans (18). He supports this argument by noting that because school vouchers are voluntary many schools can and will reject minority applicants. In addition, he notes that state law limits the number of charter schools, thus ensuring that only a few students will enjoy their benefit (18). Mr. Owens also uses a comparative study in New Zealand to argue that competition will not benefit public schools (19).³ Finally, Mr. Owens argues that school choice initiatives reinforce racist ideology because they place a burden on minority families to seek out quality private schools when this is not an issue for wealthy white families (20).

We might sum up the arguments by saying that school choice measures are unethical because they will not work to achieve the goal of a better education for minority children. In other words, school choice *might* work if there were better guarantees that minority children would not be rejected from private schools, and it *might* work if legal limits to the number of char-

² As I have noted in the text, I am not suitably equipped to evaluate Mr. Owens's empirical claims. I leave the evaluation of his empirical data to others.

³ A stronger case needs to be made that New Zealand's racial situation is analogous to our own.

ter schools were not so constrictive. Contrary to the assertion that school choice initiatives are *inherently* unethical, it would seem that their ethical status depends on whether or not they can provide a better education for minority students; their ethical status depends on whether the initiatives work. This question of whether school choice "works" is an empirical question, and it is the same question that Mr. Owens has already admitted is still undecided. We have, it seems to me, a rather strange case in which an empirically undecided question is moved to the realm of ethics, where it is then declared unethical on the basis of questionable empirics. It is entirely unclear as to how school choice is unethical in and of itself apart from evaluating how well it works. As already stated, the jury is still out.

Mr. Owens also contends that because school choice cannot improve education for "all or even most black urban students" it is an ethical failure. Leaving aside the questionable judgment that school choice cannot have a positive impact on more than just a few, this contention invites at least two responses. First, I am not aware of any school choice proponent who argues that charter schools and school vouchers can unilaterally save the mess that is our public school system. The question is not best framed as one between "only public schools" or "only school choice." The very language of "choice" implies that advocates of school choice see their initiatives as *part* of the solution.

This leads to the second response. If the standard of a successful and ethical program of public education is that it must meet the needs of all students, then it is unclear why Mr. Owens so faithfully sticks with an institution that for its entire existence has grossly failed the African American community. The policy initiatives Mr. Owens points to in the conclusion of his paper, more school funding, continued affirmative action, and aggressive urban renewal, may, or may not, lead to a public system that meets the needs of all of its students. The plain facts are that we will not know how these proposals will fare given Mr. Owens' noble but very high standard, until we have experimented with them for a number of years in various cities and communities.

Why not grant the same experimental latitude to school choice measures? This question becomes especially acute when one considers that while national polls show roughly half of the population supports various sorts of school choice, this percentage rises when the sample is limited to parents of public school children, and rises yet more when reduced to in-

ner-city and minority parents.⁴ It is odd that Mr. Owens does not address the fact that the most fervent support for school choice initiatives comes from minorities. He would strengthen his paper by incorporating this aspect of the issue into his argument, if only to explain why so many parents who have such an important stake in education policy disagree with his positing of school choice as unethical.

Mr. Owens' final and most important objection to school choice is that at heart it reflects a racist perpetuation of a segregated society. This is so because rather than demanding quality public schooling for children everywhere, school choice advocates would force minority urban families to hunt for quality private schools, a burden not faced by wealthy white suburbanites. There is nothing intrinsic to a school choice philosophy that requires its advocates to let public schools off the hook. School choice need not be an either/or dichotomy, and there is nothing incompatible with supporting school choice initiatives while *at the same time* supporting Mr. Owens' own policy initiatives of increased school funding, affirmative action, and urban renewal. In fact, it would not be surprising if a significant majority of urban families did support all of these solutions. Of course, the systemic change that Mr. Owens is calling for will require more than the support of those who will most immediately benefit from it.⁵ Given the breadth of support it will take for a substantial improvement to be made in education, Mr. Owens must appeal to the very constituency of white suburbanites who have perpetuated the problem. It is to this issue that I now turn.

STRUCTURAL RACISM AND PERSUASION

One of the consistent themes of Mr. Owens' paper is that underlying our society's problems of education and race is "a system of structural inequi-

⁴ For national poll information, see the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, May 18–June 11, 1999. For support for school vouchers in Massachusetts among public school and minority parents, see the March 2000 poll conducted by the Pioneer Institute, available on 10/01/2001 at <http://www.pioneerinstitute.org/research/policy/piodrct8.cfm>. A poll finding similar results in Kansas is available at <http://www.heartland.org/education/juloo/polls.htm>. See Gallup's polls on the issue as well at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/indicators/ineducation.asp>.

⁵ Though importantly Mr. Owens rightly points out that everyone has a stake in the renewal of our urban neighborhoods.

ties that privilege the narrow interests of white suburbanites" "grounded in a racist view of humanity" (2). He links the racism that led to Jim Crow and segregation following the Civil War to the abhorrent conditions present in many urban school systems (3). It is asserted that "overwhelming white resistance to school desegregation efforts prevented any real progress from taking place" and that "white America" has opposed equality in education for minority children (14–15).⁶ Finally, Mr. Owens writes that "history has taught us that parents and school leaders in predominantly white schools are willing to go to great lengths to ensure that black enrollment is kept at a minimum in their schools" (18).

The solution can be achieved by "dismantling the ideology of racism and the view of humanity that it embodies" (3). This will involve uncovering, uprooting, and replacing racist ideology with a "morally sound perspective," namely something like King's view of humanity that I addressed in the beginning of the paper. I conclude this paper by questioning this commitment to framing the issue of inequality in urban education solely in terms of structural and underlying ideological racism.

While I believe there is a strong argument to be made countering Mr. Owens' characterization of America as a nation still steeped in racist ideology and dividedly facilely into white wealthy suburbs and poor black cities, I will not engage in that argument.⁷ For the purposes of my argument I will concede for the sake of argument that there still exists an overwhelming pervasive racism in America. Even if such a description were accurate, I contend that the key to revitalizing the educational opportunities of minorities in urban settings does not lie with uncovering, uprooting, and replacing moralities. What can I possibly mean by this strange statement?

⁶ Mr. Owens goes on after this quotation by describing the reaction of many Southern whites to the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education*. Reprehensible as those reactions were, it is misleading to support a general claim about "white America[']s" purposive resistance to racial equality *now* by describing the regional reactions of Southerners in the 1950s *then*.

⁷ This is for a couple of reasons. First my academic area does not cover race or political psychology. In addition, given today's racial climate within the academy, it would be awkward, to say the least, for a white, middle-class suburbanite to challenge an African American student's appraisal of contemporary racism, particularly if that student specializes in issues of race and society.

It is this. Earlier I suggested that the political and racial climate in contemporary America is such that no one could legitimately claim that racial equality was not important (a normative truth), nor could they claim that America's inner cities have adequate school systems (an empirical truth). If I am correct, then the key to persuading middle and upper class citizens of all races, cities, towns, and suburbs is not to frame the issue in terms of a racist society continuing to hold down oppressed minorities. This approach, *even if it represents reality*, will bog down in debates regarding racism and white guilt, complicated by knee-jerk reactions from conservatives who will resist such a characterization. In other words, the intermediate end of persuading the nation to achieve the larger end of better education will be defeated by the means of framing the issue primarily in terms of racism.

The key is to persuade enough citizens that their stated ideals (which may or may not be sincere) do not match up with the realities of inner-city education. Those who are sincere should rally to the cause and those who are not can be shamed into participating, or at least staying out of the way. After all, the gains made through the passage of the Civil War amendments, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and civil rights legislation did not aim primarily at ridding our land of underlying racist ideologies. They sought, first of all, real, measurable, and concrete improvements in the lives of African Americans: freedom from bondage, voting rights, affirmative action, to name a few. Any effect they have had on the racist attitudes of American citizens has followed from the concrete achievements of those movements.

More importantly, the resort to a racism paradigm is unnecessary given the rich moral resources available to ethicists such as Mr. Owens working from African American history and Christianity. Indeed, the most powerful and moving arguments in Mr. Owens' paper are his moral arguments in the beginning and conclusion of his paper. I do not wish my more critical comments to discolor my overall appreciation for Mr. Owens' project. He has rightly identified an issue of paramount moral concern and has offered us a theological framework within which to understand and reason about the injustice that afflicts our inner-city youth. I am heartened to know that scholars of Mr. Owens' caliber are calling on all of us to make good on our moral and religious beliefs. That he has combined an excellent theoretical grounding for such beliefs with an impassioned challenge to examine the means of putting these beliefs in action is reason enough to be encouraged about the future of race relations in general and urban education in particular.

Pragmatism as Anti-Racism: A Response to Ray Owens¹

DIANE WHITMORE

TODAY, THOSE FROM ALL PARTS OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM AGREE THAT PUBLIC EDUCATION for African American children is in a crisis. In his education plan, President Bush's first priority is to improve the academic performance of disadvantaged students, and his plan offers rewards to states that narrow the achievement gap while improving overall student performance (White House, 2001:2–4). Some—those who favor school choice or vouchers or who oppose school funding equalization—think that market competition will help schools. Some think that money does not matter. Perhaps, as Mr. Owens argues, these opinions come from deep-seated racism. Perhaps they are the result of an idealized view of the market and its potential to help the education system. Perhaps they believe the branch of the academic literature that argues that additional resources have no positive impact on student outcomes.

Mr. Owens argues that the black-white achievement gap stems from racist, inequitable school funding formulas. Since racism is at the root of the problem, he argues, addressing the achievement gap “must begin by dismantling the ideology of racism and the view of humanity that it embodies” (3). I agree that it is important to address the racist structural causes of the achievement gap and the poor state of public education for the bulk of African Americans. But in this crisis, we should not *begin* our response there. I propose an alternative: pragmatism as anti-racism. The most effective way of combating racism in this case is to improve schooling now, and to improve it for *all* African Americans. As I will describe below, there is strong, compelling evidence that reducing the size of classes in public schools will reduce the achievement gap. There is widespread agreement

¹ The author thanks Elliot Ratzman for helpful conversations.

among policy-makers and in public opinion that actions must be taken immediately to raise the achievement levels of all students—particularly African American students—and to narrow the achievement gap between the races. In response to the urgency of the problem, we should support targeted, research-based strategies to immediately improve education for all children. Before I present evidence on the effect of reduced class size, I will give an economist's perspective on Mr. Owens' argument in favor of school-funding equalization.

Put simply, recent economic research confirms Mr. Owens' focus on school funding as an essential means of reducing the black-white achievement gap in public schools. In economic circles, however, this has not always been the prevalent view. The old conventional wisdom among economists was that increased funding does not improve student performance. This view is typically based on Hanushek's (1986) influential meta-analysis of the education literature, which came to the surprising conclusion that "there appears to be no strong or systematic relationship between school expenditures and student performance." In the fifteen years since his paper, however, there have been many studies that challenge the old wisdom. Much of the recent literature (summarized in Krueger, 2000) finds significant impact of expenditures on student outcomes and uncovers flaws in the data and methodology of the papers underlying the Hanushek meta-analysis. This research has found that some costly interventions (for example, Head Start and class-size reduction in the early grades) have positive impacts and are cost-effective.² Thus, based on the economic evidence subsequent to Hanushek, school funding plays an integral role in student achievement.

There is, therefore, a substantial body of economic evidence to support Mr. Owens' focus on school funding as a primary means of reducing the black-white achievement gap. Contrary to Mr. Owens' opinion, however, it is not clear to me that mere equalization in funding should be the goal. It is quite probable that in order to close the gap, *more* funding should be given to disadvantaged children than to their wealthier counterparts. We must bear in mind, after all, that increasing funding for African American students is just a means to the end. We should be concerned with raising and

² It is worth noting that even though researchers still squabble about the impact of money, the courts seem convinced that money matters, having overturned inequitable funding formulas in many states over the past few years.

equalizing student outcomes, then, and in devising input formulas to make that possible.

Mr. Owens correctly states that we lack compelling evidence on the impact of school choice. He discusses the results of the Milwaukee voucher program and reports that different teams of evaluators come to different conclusions on the impact of vouchers (21–22). These differences can be attributed largely to differences in the selection of comparison groups of students. The goal of the policy evaluation is to estimate the difference in achievement between students in voucher schools compared to the achievement they would have had if they instead had attended a public school. Since the counter-factual achievement cannot possibly be observed, evaluators must construct a comparison group from students who did not receive vouchers but are otherwise similar in every other possible dimension to voucher recipients. The ideal policy evaluation is based on experimental evidence, in which a subset of program volunteers is randomly chosen to receive vouchers while the remainder is ineligible for them. This ensures that there are no differences in characteristics (such as income, parental involvement, or motivation) between voucher and non-voucher students that would independently affect their achievement. Since there was no such experiment in the Milwaukee voucher program, the evaluators had to construct imperfect comparison groups, each with its strengths and weaknesses. Much of the difference in findings in the three evaluations is due to different choices of comparison groups (Rouse 1998:62–63). Although some evaluations are more compelling than others, the disparate findings cause many observers to call the findings inconclusive.

There has been a more recent evaluation of voucher programs that does not suffer from the limitations of the Milwaukee program. Howell, Wolf, Peterson, and Campbell (2000) analyzed randomized voucher programs for low-income elementary-school students in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D.C. In these programs, interested families outnumbered the available vouchers, so the vouchers were distributed via a randomized lottery, while follow-up data were collected on voucher recipients and the lottery losers (regardless of whether they remained in a public school or found another way to attend a private school). Howell et al. found that, overall, low-income African American voucher recipients who remained in private schools for two years scored 6.0 percentile points higher than their counterparts who did not switch. They observed no achievement gains for white voucher recipients.

There is evidence, then, that vouchers improve school performance for those who choose to apply for a voucher. However, there is also evidence—stronger evidence—that reduced class size in the early grades improves performance for all students while producing more relative gains for African American and low-income students. Put simply, class-size reduction helps to close the black-white achievement gap. The evidence on smaller class size, presented in Krueger and Whitmore (2001b), comes from Tennessee’s Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio), which was a randomized experiment run in the mid-1980s. As discussed above, experiments are considered the gold standard in social science research because the randomization insures that there are no underlying differences between students assigned to various class types that would independently affect performance. In Project STAR, 11,600 students and their teachers were randomly assigned to small (target of 13 to 17 students) or normal-sized (22 to 25 students) classes. A single wave of students was assigned to its class-type in kindergarten and typically remained in that class-type through third grade. After the third grade, all students returned to normal-sized classes.

During the time that students attended the smaller classes of Project STAR, average test scores increased by 7 to 10 percentile points for African American students and by 3 to 4 percentile points for white students. When all students returned to normal-sized classes in fourth grade, the test-score gains from attending a small class fell to about 5 percentile points for African American students and 1.5 points for white students, remaining at that level through eighth grade (the last year with comparable test-score data).

Project STAR also produced significant long-term benefits from attending a small class in the early grades. Small-class attendance raised the likelihood that African American students would take the ACT or SAT college-entrance exam from 32 to 41 percent. Based on these findings, if all students were assigned to a small class, the black-white gap in numbers taking a college entrance exam would fall by an estimated 60 percent. Average SAT or ACT scores also improved slightly. Furthermore, the small classes helped reduce teen childbearing, teen fatherhood rates, and crime convictions.

Thus, there is strong evidence in favor of reducing class size. In fact, where comparisons are possible, it has been shown to be more effective than vouchers. Since the impact of education policy varies by characteristics like race and socio-economic status, it is important to compare similar groups of students when comparing the impact of different policy interventions. Krueger and Whitmore (2001b: 26–28) analyzed Project STAR students who

are similar to the voucher recipients studied in Howell et al. (2000). When Project STAR results were scaled in the same way as the voucher results, smaller classes improved student test scores for low-income African American students by 8.6 percentile points—50 percent larger than the impact of vouchers. Although class-size reduction is costly, Krueger and Whitmore (2001a) present a cost-benefit analysis suggesting that the investment in quality education in the early grades more than pays for itself in increased future wages for small-class students and decreased social costs associated with a reduction in teen pregnancy and crime.

In conclusion, Ray Owens' paper calls attention to a crucial social problem, and recent economic research has contributed significantly to the formulation of its solution. Public policy aimed at the black-white achievement gap should improve the educational system for all African American students, it should obtain the largest feasible achievement gains, and its impact should be immediate. The reduction of class size in public schools, coupled with the targeting of African American students, constitutes precisely this kind of policy. It has been shown to improve outcomes for all students and to improve test scores more effectively than voucher programs. Moreover, its effects are immediate and long-lasting. Ray Owens is correct to suggest that a multi-faceted approach will prove most effective in closing the achievement gap. Challenging the ideology of racism and supporting affirmative action can and should factor into this approach. Economically speaking, however, the reduction of class size represents an equally indispensable pragmatic option.

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John Calvin's Rhetorical Doctrine of Sin. By Don Compier. Texts and Studies in Religion 86. Edwin Mellen Press, 2001, 154 pages.

Don Compier rejects a systematic approach to Calvin's hamartiology, focusing instead on his prophetic denunciations of the actual sins of his time and the practical ends he sought through rhetorical means. According to Compier, Calvin glimpsed something of what we would call human rights, despite some personal failures in living up to his own insights. Compier interprets Calvin's hamartiological polemics against the papacy as an attack on what he perceived as exploitative, hegemonic, and destructive penitential practices that prohibited human well-being.

The move away from a systematic approach to Calvin's hamartiology reflects both Compier's methodological aim to bridge the gap between historical and theological readings of Calvin, and his interest in the abiding influence of humanism in Calvin's thought. Humanist thinking emphasized the importance of rhetorical skills, such as *decorum*, i.e., the capacity to adapt to the specific requirements of varying audiences. The focus, then, would be on the context to be addressed, and not on formulating "eternal" or "universal" truths. Once we understand Calvin's writing in terms of the method of humanist rhetoric, our interpretation of his doctrinal pronouncements must follow suit, says Compier. This interpretative strategy leads him to ask how Calvin's treatment of human sinfulness served to further his political program of promoting changes in France favorable to the Protestant cause. Compier's hope is to find in Calvin an example of an engaged mode of theological praxis that might teach us that theological relevance does not require the sacrifice of Christian identity, but that the coherence of our tradition lies precisely in its perpetual willingness to address current needs.

The book is divided into four chapters, in the first of which we find a historical overview of Calvin's humanist education, as well as an informative discussion of Ciceronian rhetoric. From this historical analysis Compier concludes that Calvin's theological method reflects many aspects of Ciceronian rhetoric, including a concern for practical affairs rather than abstract speculation, the principle of decorum (which casts his work in a thoroughly contextual mold), a polemical tone, and a holistic anthropology with a high regard for the proper place of human passions. The overall picture of Calvin that emerges from Compier's analysis is evocative of the contextual and liberation theologians of our time, whose primary focus is on

addressing contextual problems, rather than on abstract theological speculation.

Chapter two focuses on the substance of Calvin's political argument. Compier sees the apologetic and polemical (and not the pedagogical) rhetoric as primary in the *Institutes*. He contends that Calvin's attacks on the papacy have nothing to do with denominationalism or religious intolerance, but rather with his fight for persecuted Protestants and opposition to the Roman church as an oppressive political power of his day. Thus Calvin's pronouncements about human sinfulness in the *Institutes* functioned much like modern-day critical theories in aiming to expose reigning social ideas as serving not the common good but the interests of a particular group. However, Calvin also urged people to face their own complicity in structures and habits that offend God and oppress fellow human beings. There is thus both a systemic and an individual aspect to sin in Calvin's thought. Compier follows Merold Westphal in understanding Calvin's infamous notion of "total depravity" in terms of extent, not degree. Therefore, Calvin is saying two things with the concept of total depravity: in human life there are no sin-free zones, and sin is not located exclusively within one human faculty. Analogically, "original sin" should be understood in terms of "total," i.e., as an active and constant presence in all of human life with a malignant reproductive capacity that constantly gives birth to new evil, thus depicting the radical seriousness of the human predicament.

In chapter three Compier deals with epistemological problems that can arise from this acknowledgment of the radical seriousness of the human predicament. If human sin is so pervasive, what guarantees exist that proposals for social change will not result in yet further instances of our ability to pervert even the noblest aims? According to Compier's analysis, Calvin managed to avoid two extreme reactions to this epistemological problem. Calvin's realism, grounded in his awareness of human sinfulness, safeguarded him against seeking absolute epistemological certainty (which, in Calvin's day, took the form of fideism, proto-foundationalism, or Stoicism). He did not fall prey to the opposite extreme of skepticism or resignation either. While Calvin's hamartiology led him to call for the renunciation of all human intellectual and moral pretensions, he did not see this as the resignation of human responsibility for behavioral transformation, but rather as the first step in taking responsibility for that transformation. Compier thus concludes that we find in the *Institutes* a practical and activist mode of

theology that avoids both the tyranny of absolutism and the indifference of radical relativism.

The fourth chapter focuses on Calvin's attack on what he perceived as the papacy's violation of human beings made in God's image, its tyrannical government, and its abuse of confession and penitence. Compier contends that the sanctity of human lives occupies a special place in Calvin's theological discourse. Calvin's polemics retain the basic grammar of biblical speech about human sinfulness as "missing the mark" of the good that God intends for human lives. Therefore his presentation of God's standards functioned as a vision guiding his program for the reform of church and state.

Agreeing with scholars who find in Calvin's treatment of the image of God also an argument for social justice, Compier argues that Calvin's zeal for God's honor should be understood as functioning within the whole of the double love command. Calvin attacks the economic exploitation of the poor through indulgences, saying that hurting the neighbor amounts to "wounding God himself." Calvin also attacks papal and clerical control over human life because it usurps the power of God to forgive sin, and thereby deifies the hierarchy of the church, thus inhibiting opposition to tyrannical abuses of power. True to the rhetorical principle of decorum, Calvin instead permitted all "indifferent matters" to be settled according to local needs and customs. Thus, says Compier, instead of deifying the status quo, Calvin was open to the possibility of change, although it had to be appropriate to the context. The third aspect of Calvin's attack on the papacy focused on the penitential system, which Calvin saw as psychologically abusive and as promoting tyranny and superstition. According to Compier's analysis, then, Calvin's hamartiological polemic makes three basic moves: it denounces the violation of human lives; it attacks systemic injustice; and it depicts a rival doctrine of sin as sinful in itself (i.e., as missing the mark of the good God intends for human lives).

Although Compier concludes that Calvin's political program was ultimately unsuccessful and his legacy problematic, Compier does find in Calvin an example of an engaged mode of theological praxis that we might well want to emulate in some respects. His conclusion is that "Calvinism" does not manifest itself in terms of a systematic body of doctrines, but rather, that theology done in the spirit of Calvin will take the context as seriously as he did. "Calvinism" is thus a theology of praxis more than a theology of speculation.

This has been a thoroughly enjoyable book to read. True to his stated methodological aim, the author manages to make both a historical and a theological contribution. The Calvin who emerges in these pages is not a total stranger, as anyone familiar with the work of people such as North American theologian Nicholas Wolterstorff or South African theologian John de Gruchy knows. But this Calvin has to some extent been a forgotten one, lost behind the image of the stern, authoritative Reformer of Geneva. Without arguing that there is no truth to such an image of Calvin, Compier manages to let Calvin the contextual theologian, for whom human dignity is inextricably linked to God's honor, arise from obscurity.

Compier could have related the epistemological problems discussed in chapter three more clearly to the issue of openness to change in Calvin, which would have allowed him to interpret and combat Calvin's conservative legacy in more detail. Although he abandons the universal rule of the clergy for a more contextual organization of life and thus is more open to change in *principle*, in *practice* Calvin's principle of contextual appropriateness often functions as a fundamentally conservative move, in that it allows local oppressive practices to continue unchecked. Compier poses the doctrine of sin as a safeguard against making idols of human institutions and practices, whether claiming to be based on universal principles or communal consensus, but historically the doctrine of sin has not led to epistemological humility but rather to a perpetuation of oppressive cultural constructs, such as sexism. However, through a careful reading of the *Institutes*, Compier argues convincingly that there is more to Calvin's hamartiology than is often asserted. Despite the limited scope of his analysis (it would have been interesting to learn what a reading of Calvin's hamartiological rhetoric in his biblical commentaries would deliver), Compier manages to identify elements in Calvin's polemic against oppressive powers that can well serve as guidelines for a hamartiology that goes beyond abstract theological reflections towards active resistance against that which harms human well-being.

In short, Compier's careful historical analysis and stimulating reflection on a contemporary appropriation of Calvin makes this a unique book that should be read by both Calvin scholars and those interested in theologies of praxis.

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The Jewish Manumission Inscriptions of the Bosporan Kingdom. By E. Leigh Gibson. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 75. Mohr Siebeck, 1999, x and 201 pages.

Though the picture is changing, both with recent publications and archaeological work, Western scholarship still, for the most part, too often neglects the Jews of the Bosporan kingdom on the northern Black Sea coast. E. Leigh Gibson's valuable examination of a group of manumission inscriptions from the first centuries of the Common Era linked with the Jewish community in the region goes some way to remedying the situation. She compares the manumission practices these inscriptions detail with relevant Greek and Jewish practices to determine the degree to which the communities erecting these inscriptions were interacting with, or isolating themselves from, local practices. These texts have suffered from the fact that most of the scholarly attention that has been paid to them has been in languages not common to Western scholarship, specifically Russian and Polish. Gibson's study is an attempt to bring these inscriptions to a wider audience, though unfortunately she was unable to read the languages herself and had to rely on translations of what she believed to be the most important secondary sources.

A revision of her doctoral thesis, the study is divided into two parts. In the first section, Gibson examines the context of the inscriptions and in the second she goes on to provide an analysis of the texts themselves. Gibson begins her study with an examination of the history and make-up of the Bosporan Kingdom, detailing its close ties with the Hellenic world. This both helps provide background to the reader and establishes the validity of her subsequent examination of Greek manumission texts as evidence for local practices. She follows this with an interesting discussion of the evidence for the Jewish communities in the region. Next, she discusses traditions of Greek manumission practices, focusing primarily on the place of religion in manumission and the role of the texts in formalizing the continued relationship between slave and owner. She argues that the inscriptions were likely erected out of social self-interest on the part of the owner, and not for any perceived benefit of the slave (49–55). She then examines relationships between Graeco-Roman Judaism and slavery—both the idealized biblical practices and actual attitudes towards slavery found in the relevant literature. She moderates more recent attacks on apologetic views of Jewish

slavery, showing how Jews of the period were at least concerned with the fate of Jews enslaved by gentiles (81, 89).

In the second part of the book, Gibson approaches the manumission texts first through a discussion of all of the epigraphic manumission evidence from the region, especially the non-Jewish remains. She then addresses three of the most debated of the inscriptions, those which make reference to the “most high god” and employ the phrase “under Zeus, Ge, and Helios.” She considers the use of the pagan phrase as formulaic and argues that it should not necessitate any assumptions about the religiosity of those who erected the inscriptions (119). Finally she examines the synagogue manumission inscriptions, focusing primarily on those requiring further services of the freed slave. She criticizes previous arguments that the obligation should be understood as religious, obliging the slave to convert, demonstrating that this was more likely a clause requiring community service from the slave, in keeping with established Greek norms. Further, she details how the inscriptions more closely resemble civic manumission inscriptions, which challenges those using these inscriptions as evidence for the sacrality of synagogue buildings.

The book is well structured, both in terms of Gibson’s methodological concerns and literary structure. Gibson begins with an excellent discussion of some of the methodological issues that she faces, and her considerations of the problems with identifying inscriptions as Jewish are very useful (5–8). Her discussion of the impact of earlier scholars of Christianity on Graeco-Roman Judaism in general and on the *paramone* inscriptions in particular is also excellent, as it provides the framework for her challenge to common earlier assumptions. The book is well structured. Gibson’s use of summaries at the end of each chapter is especially helpful after her dense discussions of the terminology and forms of the inscriptions. That said, it would have been helpful had Gibson included a map of the area.

As well, she provides a very detailed discussion of the context of the Greek and Jewish manumission practices. Gibson is careful throughout the first section to explain why she is using certain materials, for instance showing the strong links between the Bosporan kingdom and the Hellenic world before embarking on a discussion of Greek practice. When she arrives at the inscriptions themselves, the work that she has done in contextualizing her data makes her arguments that more compelling.

The primary problem with the book is that it does not fully explore the implications its findings suggest. The conclusions feel rushed, and it seemed

as if she could have taken discussion further. Perhaps she could have included another more full complete chapter with a discussion of what these inscriptions have to say about Jewish life in the Bosporan kingdom. It is commendable that Gibson wanted to avoid pushing her data too far, but after the intense study that she has given to the context of the inscriptions some more speculative discussion might have been warranted. In all, this book is an important contribution to our understanding of the area, and will be a good reference for these important texts.

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Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q. By William B. Arnal. Fortress Press, 2001, xiv and 290 pages.

In his introduction, Arnal lays out the presuppositions with which he is working. Aside from small variations, he strictly follows John Kloppenborg's stratification of Q, relying on the text of the Society of Biblical Literature's International Q Project. Making this kind of point up front reflects Arnal's aim throughout the book: he wants to avoid the inconsistent methodologies of those who pick and choose their Q sayings in order to better fit the social reality they have conceived for the collection before they have even begun their study.

In his attempt to locate the *Sitz im Leben* of the formative stratum of Q (i.e. Q¹), Arnal first criticizes the itinerancy hypothesis in the light of which Q¹ has often been interpreted. Instead of merely detaching Q¹ from the itinerancy hypothesis, Arnal successfully debunks the whole idea that wandering semi-ascetic itinerants were part of the early Jesus movement. The first three chapters summarize the different versions of this hypothesis and present at times a harsh, but not undeserved, critique of its arguments and, according to Arnal, its assumptions.

Chapter one, "Itinerant Preachers and the Didache," briefly goes through the origins of the itinerancy hypothesis with Adolf von Harnack's commentary on the newly discovered Didache in 1884 and then goes on to locate von Harnack's ideas, particularly their presuppositions, in the Age of Progress. A discussion of Protestant theology and the later influence of Max Weber on the itinerancy hypothesis would have been appropriate here. Chapter two, "The Sayings Tradition and Itinerant Preachers," describes the extremely influential work of Gerd Theissen and then the different branches

of his intellectual progeny. Arnal certainly does not hold his punches in the first two chapters, but chapter three, “The Problem with Itinerant Preachers,” is a detailed assault on the itinerancy hypothesis.

I cannot go through his detailed and persuasive arguments due to lack of space, but it is worth noting that Arnal gave much thought to this material. He looks closely at the methodology and assumptions of each scholar and is willing to point out the virtues of stances with which he disagrees. For example, his consistent focus on the quality of individual arguments as well as on scholarly methodology leads him to point out the irrelevancy of the arguments made by certain scholars he agrees with (on Cynics pp. 56–57). In sum, Arnal’s main quarrel with the itinerancy hypothesis is that it is unrealistic at best and perhaps an all too obvious imposition of contemporary interests onto the past.

According to Arnal, previous scholars’ attempts to contextualize Q have been inadequate, to say the least. Vague generalizations about the pressures of Roman Imperialism and “a reified understanding of Q as a religious document” have led to “the exclusion of such mundane and distasteful matters as day to day subsistence” (98). Thus, in chapter four, “The Socioeconomics of Roman Galilee,” Arnal gives “a description of everyday life in Galilee” (100) by presenting recent archaeological work on Roman Galilee. His basic argument is that the (re)foundation of Sepphoris and the foundation of Tiberias, which were inextricably linked to Roman attempts to facilitate the removal of surplus product from the Galilean hinterland, transformed the local economy. “This effect in turn was socially disruptive on a day-to-day basis, and, among other things, changed the character of rural social organization and hierarchy” (101). The people most affected by these changes would have been village scribes, “a small class of literate administrators . . . essential to the smooth functioning of the region even prior to Roman-Herodian city building” (151). These administrators stood between the wealthy, large landowners and the smallholder (152), and “both increasingly identify with the progressively exploited peasantry yet are alienated from them and, indeed, participate in their exploitation” (153).

Chapter five, “Q’s Rhetoric of Uprootedness,” attempts to explain the imagery of Q that has often been taken as an indicator of its itinerant background. Q “uses poverty alongside other images of social inversion as a metaphor to communicate the repudiation of social hierarchy as the Q tradents experienced it” (183). The text provides the space for arguments

whose cumulative effect is “the subversion of local and translocal hierarchy as it is being manifested, in novel (and evidently disagreeable) forms, for these individuals and for their occupational caste generally” (183). Thus the social agenda of Q¹ is “Luddite”: it harps on the past, while critiquing the contemporary social order (202). Unfortunately, despite Arnal’s legitimate arguments for building on hypotheses in the introduction of the book, this reviewer at least suspects further stratification of Q¹ to be as certain as *gematria* or an election in Florida (e.g. tables on 190 and 201).

In a refreshing and perhaps slightly obnoxious way, Arnal allows the contempt he feels for much of the scholarship he critiques to remain apparent, while at the same time engaging this scholarship on the level of its ideas and content. He often cites what he sees as the agendas of different scholars and at a certain point even invokes Freud’s “return of the repressed” (7) to refer to criticisms of Kloppenborg, his doctoral supervisor. When it adorns highly stimulating arguments, as it does here, such candor is not necessarily inappropriate, but it inevitably begs the question: what is Arnal’s agenda beyond defending the work of his Doktorvater? If we can engage in the pop sociology that Arnal devotes much time to successfully disputing, does not greater proximity beget greater contention? Arnal is in fact arguing on two fronts. He wants to defend Q scholarship against those who prejudge it as too wishy-washy and hypothetical, but he saves his ire for those in the camp of Q and broader Synoptic Gospel scholarship whose work justifies the prejudice of the former group.

If, as Arnal admits, “congenial views” are not “necessarily false” (213, n. 48), why does he spend so much time showing how congenial the itinerancy hypothesis is to contemporary academics, whom he accuses of projecting their idea of countercultural figures onto the biblical past as a reaction to their recent decline in class status. The book left me wondering whether Arnal was aware that he practices his own projection of the present onto the past. He writes of these academics: “The very fact that such a reading is itself against the grain of the ordinary canonical treatment of these texts would itself probably be impossible were the academics still the predominant ideological mainstays and favored retainers of the (genuinely) powerful classes” (64). This description of contemporary academics is strikingly similar to Arnal’s characterization of the disgruntled village scribes whose pens, according to Arnal, are responsible for the text of Q (cf. 158 and 171, where the scribes are referred to as a “retainer class”). Arnal then fits into

this schema as the cantankerous village scribe engaged in a local dispute over the territory that makes up the Galilean (read: boondocks) village of academia. The book lacks an index.

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Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By Jack R. Lundblom. The Anchor Bible 21A. Doubleday, 1999, xxv and 934 pages.

Lundblom's contribution to the Anchor Bible Commentary series is a worthy addition to an indispensable collection of reference works. This commentary on Jeremiah 1–20 is the first of two planned volumes on the largest and most complex prophetic book in the Hebrew Bible, and will replace the previous Anchor Bible commentary on Jeremiah written by John Bright in 1965. The book incorporates many helpful features, such as a detailed table of contents, a translation of Jeremiah 1–20 set at the beginning of the book, almost one hundred pages of introductory material, and a sixty-page bibliography. Lundblom includes in each small section (typically covering three to six verses) a discussion of the "rhetoric and composition" of the passage, detailed notes on each phrase in the text, and a reflection on the "message and audience" of the passage. He also provides three interesting appendices: a discussion of personal names in Jeremiah that have been found in extra-biblical inscriptions; an annotated roster of the characters who appear in the book (the "*dramatis personae*") organized according to their relationship with the Prophet; and a list of the instances of haplography in Jeremiah, places where the Septuagint (fifty-two times) or the Hebrew Masoretic text (seven times) has omitted a word or phrase. Finally, the book closes with indices of authors and biblical passages cited in the commentary.

Overall, *Jeremiah 1–20* fulfills its stated desire of "providing an intelligible commentary to the student and nonspecialist reader, while at the same time addressing critical issues of concern mainly to the specialist" (xv). As is the case with most works that attempt this dual task, Lundblom's book achieves one of these more fully than the other, in this case the strength being technical discussions of scholarly interest. The reader suspects that this may be the case from the very first page of the introductory material, which launches into a detailed discussion of the textual history of Jeremiah, an

extremely complicated affair. In addition to being up to one-seventh shorter, the Greek version presents the material in a different order and with a few significantly different readings. Lundblom makes much of the observation that the Septuagint has suffered from haplography (hence the appendix), and so rejects the commonplace text critical axiom that the shorter text must be the better reading. This critical judgment about the relative merits of the Hebrew and Greek renderings of the text is absolutely essential for scholars studying Jeremiah, but surely is mysterious for general readers. It is revealing that Lundblom puts this section first in his introduction, while his discussion of Jeremiah's theology is last. Perhaps more egregious is his burial of Jeremiah's historical context and prophetic career in the middle of a larger argument on "rhetorical" aspects of the book. To his credit, however, Lundblom consistently argues for the early dating and authenticity of Jeremiah's oracles, avoiding the recent tendency to strip the book of its coherency by assigning most of it to later periods.

Actually, there is no clearer indication of Lundblom's approach to the book of Jeremiah than the fact that his section on "the world of Jeremiah" comprises five pages in a 950-page book. Whereas previous commentaries on Jeremiah have focused myopically on Jeremiah's historical context and the relationship between his oracles and biographical incidents in his life, Lundblom shifts his focus to literary aspects of the book, in this case the "rhetorical" dimension of Jeremiah's oracles. In this way, the book can be a useful tool for nonspecialist readers, since such readers are more likely to have knowledge of (and interest in) the message and arguments of the book than of the intricacies of Josiah's cultic reform and Judean foreign policy viz. the Neo-babylonian Empire. To be sure, there is still a great need for historical analysis of the book, but for this scholars (and others) will need to look elsewhere. Lundblom's decision to focus his commentary on rhetorical dimensions of the book, in my view, increases its value for general readers, especially if used in conjunction with a more traditional treatment. In his introduction, Lundblom provides the reader with an entry into rhetorical criticism by presenting the history and methods of rhetorical analysis, illustrating his points with prophetic oracles, hymns, folk songs, and modern poetry, including two poems in Swedish.

Rhetorical categories such as repetition, accumulation, metaphor, allegory, argumentation strategies, irony, and drama are an excellent way to organize and understand prophetic forms of utterance. Perhaps more than

any other form of biblical literature, with the possible exception of New Testament epistles, the Hebrew Prophets cannot be understood apart from their communicative intention. Speaking into a particular historical situation to a certain group of people, the prophets called their listeners to attend to a specific message, usually with the desire to effect a behavioral change.

Rhetorical criticism, as practiced by biblical scholars such as James Muilenburg, Phyllis Tribble, and here Lundblom, works by identifying the form and structure of the passage in question. In his “rhetoric and composition” sections, Lundblom provides a detailed analysis of the structure of that passage. This kind of analysis is sometimes interesting and occasionally very helpful, but it often can seem pedantic and arcane. Lundblom avoids the excesses of this approach, though I suspect that his analysis will not be of much interest to general readers. They may, however, appreciate the clear organization of the text into its component parts, and some indication of how each part relates to the others in the overall message of the text. Another weakness of this approach is that in order for his rhetorical analysis to work for non-Hebrew readers, Lundblom’s translation of the Hebrew text must be literalistic and wooden. He attempts to preserve the phrasing, word choice, and repetitions found in the Hebrew. This is not fully possible in any translation, but Lundblom succeeds as well as can be expected. His translation is useful for his own rhetorical analysis, therefore, but it does not offer much in the way of poetry. The Hebrew text of Jeremiah is at once carefully crafted and strikingly beautiful but an English translation of necessity must choose to replicate one or the other of these traits. It is interesting to note here that the old Anchor Bible commentary by Bright contains perhaps the most poetic rendering of Jeremiah we have, and is worth having just for the masterful translation.

Where Lundblom’s work is the most interesting and relevant for nonspecialists is in his reflections on the “message and audience” of each passage. Here the author shows himself to be an accomplished and sensitive exegete. In his illumination of Jeremiah’s difficult word of judgment, Lundblom incorporates insights from classic theological texts, modern literary works, and modern historical events such as terrorist killings and the Holocaust. He concludes his short reflection on Jeremiah 14:17–19 with these thoughts:

Mass killings, whether from war or terrorism, shock the imagination and render numb the sensibilities of those who come upon such hor-

rors . . . Those who have come upon these scenes . . . have wept night and day; others directly affected or just hearing the news have done likewise. Tonight my wife and I wept for people we don't even know.

BRYAN D. BIBB

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A History of Polish Christianity. By Jerzy Kloczowski. Cambridge University Press, 2000, xxxviii and 385 pages.

In this monograph, Jerzy Kloczowski seeks to present, as he states in his preface, a “synthetic overview” of Christianity in Poland from the tenth through the twentieth centuries (xxxiii). The primary focus of the study, however, is the historical development of the Roman Catholic Church, Roman Catholic theology, and Roman Catholic Orders in Poland. Kloczowski provides a solid historical survey tracing the mutual history of Polish nationalism and the Polish Catholic Church. As a guide to the general reader, Kloczowski includes extensive maps at the beginning of his monograph which outline Poland’s changing religious demographic throughout its history of partitions and shifting borders.

Kloczowski’s study of Christianity in Poland often reflects a methodological approach to the study of religion based on the model of *dwoeverie* (dual-faith), an approach which was pervasive during the Soviet era. This model juxtaposes the religious doctrine of the official Church with the religious practices of the masses in order to emphasize the fact that the masses never fully assimilated the Christian tradition imposed on them but continued to maintain pagan elements in their practice of religion. In Kloczowski’s discussions of different periods of Polish history, the presence of pre-Christian rituals in the practice of popular religion is highlighted in order to draw attention to the “symbiotic relationship” between Christianity and the “culture of the Slavs,” evidenced by the continued practice of pre-Christian holiday traditions at Christmas and Easter (9). Also, Kloczowski betrays his affinity for a Marxian historical approach in his frequent analysis of the way in which religious practices varied according to class affiliations, i.e., noble, burgher, and peasant. His evaluation of the Catholic Church’s role in reinforcing the nobleman-serf relationship and his praise of the Catholic hierarchy’s changing attitudes toward the working class (e.g. the new defense of workers’ rights in Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum*) are just two examples

of the numerous analyses of Catholicism's effect on noble-burgher-peasant class relations.

Kloczowski's discussion of the impact of geopolitics on the historical development of Christianity in Poland from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries is a particular strength of his monograph. He effectively outlines how, beginning in the seventeenth century, non-Catholics were increasingly denied rights in the Polish territories owing to the fact that the Orthodox were identified with Russian invaders and the Protestants with the Swedish or German threat. His description of the Roman Catholic Church's (especially the Polish clergy's) sympathy for the Polish nationalists, who led their nation's fight for independence following its partitions, further accounts for Poland's Catholic revival in the nineteenth century. Kloczowski also details the fate of the Uniate Church in Poland over the centuries which was persecuted by nationalist Poles characterizing them as collaborators with Russian occupying forces as well as by Russian Orthodox believers who took over the Uniate parishes in Poland. Tracing the effects of nationalist movements on Christianity in twentieth-century Poland, Kloczowski highlights the problems that Protestants (many of whom were of German heritage) faced on Polish soil during World War II, since they were torn between divided loyalties to Poland and Germany. Such an emphasis on the defining role that Polish nationalism has played for centuries in defining its own Christian tradition helps Kloczowski to explain why the Roman Catholic Church is such an important part of present-day Polish national identity.

Kloczowski also focuses on the history of Polish religious orders whose central importance to his history is evident from the glossary of less common orders that he places at the beginning of the monograph. First he discusses the overall flourishing of religious orders in thirteenth-century Poland which saw the growth of the Cistercian, Dominican, and Franciscan orders. He then outlines the active role which the orders played in developing the Polish educational system, beginning with the development of higher education in Krakow by the Dominicans at the end of the fourteenth century and continuing into the sixteenth century, when approximately ten thousand students were attending Jesuit schools. It is owing to such an emphasis on education that the Jesuits remained a potent force in Poland throughout the nineteenth century and that Catholicism had such a pervasive influence on Polish culture. In his discussion of religious orders in the twentieth century, Kloczowski describes the efforts of the religious orders

to challenge the Nazi invaders who killed “580 religious and 289 sisters” during World War II (301).

Perhaps the greatest disappointment with this historical survey of Christianity in Poland is its failure to explore the history of violent conflict amongst different Christian traditions as well as between Christianity and non-Christian religions, specifically Judaism. Kloczowski downplays the way in which Roman Catholicism increased its prominence in Poland over the past five centuries by ensuring that non-Catholic religions were increasingly denied rights. Instead, he attributes the dominant influence (or “victory”) of Catholicism in Poland to the “dynamism of the Polish Catholic community” and details the martyrdom and heroism of Catholics during wartime, especially in connection with World War II, while understating the role that Catholic-Jewish tensions played in the destruction of Polish Jewry in the twentieth century (108). Still, Kloczowski does indicate an awareness of these controversial issues in his analysis when he raises these concerns as possible avenues for future research. As a guide for researchers, Kloczowski includes a bibliographical essay at the end of the monograph which outlines his sources for each chapter. His understanding of the limits of his broad historical survey helps to identify his monograph as an effective point of departure for future in-depth studies of Christian traditions in Poland.

ELIZABETH BLAKE
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Close: A Young Woman's First Year at Seminary. By Chloe Breyer. Basic Books, 2000, 256 pages.

Nearly every friend who attended a theological school has whispered to me, almost in a confessional tone, that they were thinking of writing a book about the experiences of seminary life. Unlike the rest of us who let those intentions drift into the ether, Chloe Breyer undertook the task admirably. Breyer is a recent graduate of General Theological Seminary in New York City, the oldest Episcopalian seminary in the United States. The title of the book alludes to the fond name by which General students and faculty refer to their seminary in passing. Yet, “the Close” also evokes images of a life apart, a self-contained sanctuary of faith in the midst of Manhattan. Breyer has written an earnest, self-searching book that reflects both the beautiful serenity of such a place, as well as the frustrations she finds in a seminary

that does not take its theology out of the library and into the streets. What sort of priest does this seminary foster, nurture, and train? That is one of the fundamental questions that permeate this book.

When I first considered applying to seminary during my senior year of college, I sought out advice from my chaplain, Alison Boden, now Dean of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at the University of Chicago. She advised me that her own decision to enter into a pastoral life was buttressed by the realization that ministers were not saints, but entirely fallible people with their own sets of doubts and tribulations. This is the sort of portrayal that Breyer provides of herself, struggling with her own issues and questions, giving us an utterly honest perspective on her mood swings and pet peeves. Breyer is a graduate of Harvard University and is a self-avowed activist, co-founder of the journal *Who Cares*. She is careful to remind us of these traits throughout the book, almost as though these are the defining moments of her life. It is difficult for her to escape from the long shadow of her renowned father, Stephen Breyer of the Supreme Court. I do not mean that in a snide way, because it is entirely helpful for the reader to remember that Breyer's experiences are her own, born out of her own idiosyncrasies and understood through her own prejudices and appetites. This is not a generalist book about seminary life; this is a year in the life of Chloe Breyer at a specific Episcopalian seminary. And that may be its brilliance.

Two easy comparisons to other books might be made. The first appears in the publisher's opening paragraph on the cover: *One L*, the story of Scott Turow's first year at Harvard Law School. The comparison falters when one realizes that Breyer is sharing with us the beginning of her formation as a life's calling as a priest. Turow, while he might have studied torts and criminal law with great gusto and an apt ear to the stories of his classmates, writes as a writer, not as a lawyer. Whatever calling took him to law school in the first place did not stick. The second comparison might be made to Ari Goldman's *The Search for God at Harvard*, which examines his sabbatical year from the *New York Times* to pursue coursework at Harvard Divinity School. Goldman's book advances the attitude that Harvard has become a misnomered school of religious studies rather than a ground for ministerial training. However, Goldman's approach to divinity school is that of a journalist. He doesn't come for spiritual development or insight toward a future life as a rabbi. Goldman goes to Harvard to learn to be a better journalist on religious matters.

Chloe Breyer is something altogether different from Turow and Goldman's self-appraisals: a woman who has turned from an earlier career as an activist in order to become a priest. Not only is seminary interesting to her, but it is fundamentally formative for her. And we are invited along on that emotional, introspective journey. Her story is not related in a strictly chronological manner, but organized according to the thematic themes of a liturgical calendar. This is a distinctive approach, but often results in the peaks being a little too "high," the valleys a little too "low." In this respect, the liturgical themes feel a little manipulative. Breyer seems to want the reader to feel for her. Heaping the successes, and then alternatively the failures, certainly accomplishes that. But there is no even, restful time in which Breyer's life simply flows in a balanced manner, with highs and lows intermingling throughout. My suspicion is that Breyer earnestly is telling her story, and she thought this "liturgical calendar" approach would be an appropriately Anglican way of telling a tale that is difficult to bring together, no matter the approach.

Despite these criticisms, Breyer ought to be commended for the courage she brings to telling her story. She does not hold back the punches and criticisms, most especially those criticisms that she thinks she deserves. This self-honesty comes through most clearly when she relates the near-start to her first church internship, abandoning it at the last moment, at her installation. Although she makes this wrenching decision in favor of a strong sense of call to a position at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where she still works, she relates the disappointment of her mentors and herself in this reckless behavior. These are the real fits and starts that one finds oneself experiencing at the beginning of a ministerial career. Breyer is startlingly genuine in letting us witness her least moments, as well as those in which she shines.

There are certain themes which every past and present seminarian understands well: the relentless struggle to learn Greek; the sense that the secular world neither understands nor values the work to which one is called; the beautiful and sometimes disconcerting spectrum of people one encounters in theological study; the uncovering, uneven realizations of how one is called to ministry. They are all herein, and Breyer evokes these themes with every sense of wonder and frustration, all echoing true. She is fascinated by General, but finds it academically weak in comparison to her years at Harvard. She yearns to be of real service and comfort, but finds herself

sternly, uncompassionately lecturing at a patient during her difficult months of Clinical Pastoral Education at Bellevue Hospital.

Breyer's journey is her own, yet this is a story to which many past and present seminarians can relate. Most of all, it is a pilgrimage that will serve future ministers and priests to read well. It may dispel myths and stereotypes, providing realistic expectations for their three years in seminary. It is an orienting map that is reliable, and that is an invaluable service to those who may feel a call to serve and lead the church in the years to come.

STEPHEN BUTLER MURRAY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense. By Leander E. Keck. University of South Carolina Press, 2000, 206 pages.

In *Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense*, Leander Keck attempts to get at the present significance of the historical Jesus. His premise is that theology needs to be interested in history, and, in sharp contrast to some recent studies, he straightforwardly states that he is interested in history for explicitly theological reasons. Keck calls his work "something of a hybrid, neither history nor Christology proper but rather theological reflection on history—on those aspects of the Jesus of history that are central to his continuing significance" (x). Thus the tenses of the title and subtitle which name Keck's focus.

Keck begins with an important chapter on method, comparing the approaches to Jesus taken by contemporary scholars with the ones taken by the evangelists themselves. Keck wants to give the gospels a sympathetic reading, seeking to read them with the same question in mind that the writers themselves were presumably asking: the "So what?" of Jesus for their time. It is not that Keck takes an uncritical approach. He states, for instance, that the evangelists invented the contexts of Jesus' sayings as part of their answers to the "So what?" question themselves. But he also puts into focus the limited perspective of critical scholarship's constructions: "The transitoriness of all historical reconstruction must be acknowledged and all pretentious claims made on its behalf . . . must not be taken seriously" (9). One current method Keck finds suspect is the criterion of dissimilarity, which Keck says is taken too far in separating Jesus both from Judaism and early Christianity. Keck also criticizes scholars' use of the criterion of coherence in the reconstruction of Jesus' life and mission, since such consistency is

more a goal of the academy than what we find in the study of actual history. Keck's discussion of modern critics also explains what he calls their "reduced scope," meaning that "by deleting from Jesus' history all references to divine action, critics set aside precisely those parts of the gospels by which the Evangelists expressed most explicitly their understanding of the ongoing significance of Jesus, his perfect tense" (5).

Chapter two concerns the enduring significance of Jesus' Jewishness. That Jesus likely had nothing good to say about Gentiles confirms his Jewishness. Keck remarks that when Christians ignore Jesus' Jewishness, Christianity begins to look pagan, "albeit focused on Jesus."

Chapter three, "The Embodied Future: Jesus the Teacher," focuses on Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God. Keck understands the kingdom as a "rectifying impingement." His discussion of the tenses of the kingdom is particularly helpful. In contrast to C. H. Dodd of an earlier generation or the Jesus Seminar today, Keck understands the kingdom not to be fully present but imminent. Jesus undertook "to so announce and embody the imminent coming of God's kingdom that those who believed him would already change their lives to reflect the character of God's reign actualized" (108).

In chapter four, "The Fractured Prism: Jesus' Death and the Living God," Keck asks what Jesus' death tells us about God. A fascinating discussion of God's holiness ensues. Keck summarizes: "The death-and-resurrection of Jesus is consonant with the God Jesus trusted, the Holy One of Israel who in his radical otherness mysteriously 'makes poor and makes rich, brings down to Sheol and raises up, kills and makes alive'" (137). Keck maintains that the holy God intentionally endured profanation through Jesus' public humiliation so that sin could be uncovered and forgiven. Keck emphasizes, however, that "[i]f anything in the Christian tradition epitomizes the distinctive, ongoing significance of Jesus' crucifixion, it is the appropriation of the cross as a protean symbol of a way of life" (146). The greater emphasis is on the cross as a paradigm for life, not the forgiveness of sins.

Chapter five, "The Authorizing Judge: Jesus in the Moral Life," says that Jesus' life gave his teaching its moral power. Belief in Jesus includes believing Jesus, including a commitment to that which he himself was committed—the kingdom of God and the rectifying power of its impingement. Keck offers what for him is the exemplary question in moral matters: "What is the appropriate thing to do and be in light of the kind of person Jesus was?" (175). By "the kind of person Jesus was," Keck is referring to the Jesus

of history. History is important for moral discourse because it is the means by which one may answer, “To what extent is it Jesus or an imagined Jesus who is being assimilated?” (167).

Finally, this book by Yale Divinity School’s professor emeritus of biblical theology and former dean is an excellent choice to introduce the historical study of Jesus in a seminary context. This is largely due to the book’s method, its most refreshing trait. By asking “So what?” Keck attempts to make his own aims parallel with those of the Evangelists. Keck’s “So what?” profitably blurs the distinctions between history, theology, and devotion. He models how one may approach the gospels sympathetically and critically at the same time. Also making the book useful in a classroom context, Keck gives a panoramic view of what has been said by such past giants as Albert Schweitzer and Rudolf Bultmann while also engaging such current figures as John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright. Students will also appreciate the list of works cited and the indices of passages and modern authors.

DUSTIN W. ELLINGTON
DUKE UNIVERSITY

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. Edited by Donald B. Redford. Oxford University Press, 2001, 3 volumes, xii and 1,830 pages.

The *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (OEAE), edited by Donald Redford and written by over 250 contributors, seeks to present “the latest information on the civilization that developed and flourished in the Nile Valley” (ix). Filling a gap in general reference works on ancient Egypt available to English-speaking readers, the OEAE makes a valuable contribution by presenting a great wealth of information in a highly accessible manner.

The contents of the OEAE incorporate an impressive range of material in terms of chronology and topics. Beginning with the prehistory of Egypt, coverage stretches through the Islamic conquest of 642 CE, though the dynastic period receives clear emphasis. The 620 articles making up the OEAE address numerous aspects of ancient Egyptian culture, including the field of Egyptology, land and resources, archaeology, history, the state and its institutions, foreign relations, economics, society and the individual, religion, and arts and sciences. The articles achieve a nice balance of focus and thoroughness in accordance with an encyclopedic layout, and they feature numerous cross-references to other articles in the OEAE. Clear subheadings organize the longer articles so that the reader may scan quickly for information and see relationships between the various sections. Numerous black

and white photographs and drawings accompany many articles, and with only a few exceptions, these are of excellent quality. Each article concludes with a bibliography, pointing the reader to further scholarship in particular areas, and most include helpful annotation. In some cases, though, French or German works make up the majority of bibliographic items and so may prove less useful to some English-speaking readers.

Along with the clear presentation of each article, convenient access to the vast material available in the *OEAЕ* occurs through two features at the end of the third volume: the index (3:555–620) and the “Synoptic Outline of Contents” (3:549–54). For major figures or sites, the index points the reader to the primary article as well as to all other references in the *OEAЕ*, helpfully providing a one- or two-word description of each reference. It also indexes items that do not have their own entries in the encyclopedia but appear within other articles. In addition, general references to tables and figures appear within the indexed items, but specific illustrations, unfortunately, are not identified. On the whole, however, the index is very well constructed, a welcome and efficient tool for navigating this large reference work. Equally useful is the “Synoptic Outline” which orients the reader to the contents of the encyclopedia by providing an overview of all the material covered. For many users, this may be the best point of entry to the *OEAЕ* as it highlights material that the reader may not have considered and shows connections between various entries.

Several other user-friendly features deserve mention, such as the handy placement of a schematic map of Egypt listing all major sites described in the encyclopedia in the front cover of each volume. Likewise, an Egyptian king list appears in the back cover of each volume. As the preface indicates, there is significant disagreement among Egyptologists on matters of chronology, and the diversity of views is reflected in various articles. This king list, however, represents the common chronology observed in these volumes for the sake of editorial uniformity and provides a helpful guide for the reader. The reader should also note the presence in volume two of some beautiful color photo plates featuring various pieces of art and architecture. Regrettably, however, the articles do not reference these, so they may be overlooked.

The breadth of topics covered in the *OEAЕ* will appeal to a wide variety of audiences, and this certainly includes students of religion and the Bible. In many cases, it is likely that one will need to go no further than these volumes to find helpful background information; otherwise, the *OEAЕ* provides a promising springboard for further research. Some articles highlight

specific connections between Egyptian and biblical material, such as entries for “Israel,” “Biblical Tradition,” “Exodus,” “Amarna,” “Megiddo,” “Syria-Palestine,” “Joseph,” and “Moses.” One must bear in mind, however, that Egypt’s relationship to Israel or to biblical literature is not the primary concern of this work. Many articles make only slight reference to the Bible, if any mention at all. For example, the “Instructions of Hordjedef” entry notes only that “similar sentiments surface in wisdom literature of Mesopotamia and in the Bible’s Book of Proverbs” (2:173). The essay on the Instructions of Amenemope also contains no specifics beyond that it “has found its way into Hebrew scriptures (Prov 22:17–23:11)” and that Prov 22:20b refers to the “thirty chapters” at the end of *Amenemope* (2:172). Yet these articles provide much more general information about these Egyptian works than one typically finds in a biblical commentary or article, providing a fuller context for understanding such writings. Moreover, this and the other solid material presented in the *OEA* offers much to help biblical scholars gain greater knowledge of the academic disciplines involved in Egyptology. As Redford notes in the preface, the fascinating culture of ancient Egypt has attracted many enthusiasts throughout the ages (see “Egytomania,” 1:458–65), though ignorance of the field has led to flaws in understanding of evidence. Indeed, at times this has crept into biblical (and other) scholarship, and so the *OEA* will benefit readers hoping to evaluate particular works and avoid such weaknesses in their own research. Various entries on the methods of Egyptology (listed in the Synoptic Outline) will be especially useful in this regard.

In short, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* will be an invaluable addition to any library serving biblical scholars. Ambitious in scope and highly effective in presentation, these volumes offer an excellent foundation for those wishing to draw on the rich resources of ancient Egyptian culture in their work, whether historical, literary, linguistic, theological, or other.

JENNIFER S. GREEN

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Dictionary of Asian Christianity. Edited by Scott W. Sunquist (David Wu Chu Sing and John Chew Hiang Chea, associate editors). Eerdmans, 2001, xliii and 947 pages.

The Asian continent is a complex entity with a multitude of religious, cultural, ethnic, and social realities. One way scholars from Western academic

institutions have simplified these realities in the past has been to study Asian Christianity under the rubric of mission history. Within the mission history framework, Asia remained (and still remains) at the receiving end of the Christian mission enterprise, in spite of changes in the relationship between missionaries and the missionized and the growth of independent churches in Asian countries. Samuel H. Moffett's *A History of Christianity in Asia*, Vol. 1: *Beginnings to 1500* (Harper San Francisco, 1992) and Gillman and Klimkeit's *Christians in Asia Before 1500* (University of Michigan, 1999) are the only two substantial attempts to look at Christianity in Asia apart from its mission history. But as the titles suggest, neither of these books includes the history or theology of Asian Christians after 1500. Therefore, *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, which contains articles on both early and modern Christianity, is a much-needed and most welcome resource.

A commendably high percentage of the volume's contributors are Asian, providing it a certain credibility. The articles also reflect a variety of denominational perspectives. The dictionary includes articles on various independent churches and not just Roman Catholic and Protestant groups. Unlike many standard histories of Asian Christianity written from a missions perspective, *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* presents the churches of Asia in their own right. For example, the Anglican Church in Asia is given attention as a distinct church with its own history rather than as the outcome of Church Missionary Society work.

This comprehensive volume includes 1,260 entries contributed by over 450 scholars and church leaders from various Asian countries and from the West. It is a treasury of information which will benefit historians, theologians, ecumenists, and mission scholars. Historians will discover articles on well-known and lesser known missionaries, Asian Christian leaders, church and para-church organizations, and ancient and modern churches. Theologians will find information on various theologies being developed in Asian countries (e.g., Minjung Theology and Asian feminist theology). For scholars and students interested in ecumenical issues and inter-religious dialogue, the dictionary provides a fine introduction to Hindu-, Buddhist-, and Muslim-Christian encounters and conversations in Asia (past and present). Though written from a Christian perspective, articles on ancestor worship, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shamanism are particularly helpful in this regard. In addition to the historical aspect of Christianity's encounter with other religions, these well-researched articles also discuss the theological and social changes which resulted from them.

Like any collective work the entries in this volume vary in quality. Some are exceptionally valuable and include detailed bibliographies for further research (e.g., “Art and Architecture” by Masao Takenaka, “Bible Translation” by Graham Ogden, “Baptists” by Brian Stanley, and “Vietnam” by Peter Phan and Violet James). Some, on the other hand, are rather superficial essays. And a few don’t even include bibliographical information (e.g., “Church of God in India” by Samuel Mathew, “Santa Cruz Church, Thailand” by Victor Larque, and “St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India” by P. T. Chandapilla). Perhaps more disturbing is the fact that female authors are seriously underrepresented. Less than fifteen percent of the 450 contributors are women. This authorial gender inequity does not necessarily reflect any bias of the editors, but it does remind the reader that theological and historical reflection in Asia still remains primarily a male enterprise.

In spite of the few weaknesses noted above, *A Dictionary of Christianity in Asia* is a groundbreaking work. It is, in fact, more than a dictionary on Christianity in Asia. It includes the social, political, religious, and cultural histories of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. It broadens our cultural, historical, and theological understanding of Christianity in Asia. Anyone who takes the history of Christianity and its future seriously should have this resource in their library.

GLORY JOTHI THOMAS

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Michael Walzer on War and Justice. By Brian Orend. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000, viii and 226 pages.

Until the publication of this book by Brian Orend (philosophy, University of Waterloo, Canada), Michael Walzer had not, amazingly, been the single subject of a monograph or edited volume. Orend seeks to fill this gap by providing an interpretation across the whole of Walzer’s thought, from his early work on just war theory to his more recent treatments of justice. However, the weight of his focus, as the title implies, is on Walzer’s earlier work on war, which he seeks to situate and interpret in light of the more recent work on justice. Despite flaws, this book is thus doubly important, providing (finally) a comprehensive interpretation of the work of one of our most important political theorists, and offering timely normative clarification of one means of understanding and responding to political violence. Orend’s

discussion consists of clear exposition of Walzer's thought, punctuated by critical engagement highlighting points where it is insufficiently developed or internally tension-ridden.

Orend notes that there seems to be an apparent conflict between Walzer's early work on war, which makes reference to universal prohibitions, absolute values, and human rights, and his later work on justice, which is community-based and "conventionalist." He denies, however, that there are an "early" and a "late" Walzer, and the key to understanding this lies in Walzer's "unified general theory of justice" (11). Here, and throughout the book, Orend helpfully makes Walzer more systematic than he is inclined to be.

Orend concedes (chapter one) that Walzer's defense of an interpretive, or hermeneutic, method in political and moral theory, which looks to the existing beliefs and commitments of a community, is probably "the most resourceful and thoughtful defence of conventionalism as yet on offer" (30). Yet he rightly notes a number of remaining ambiguities, such as whether interpretation ultimately merges into Rawlsian-like invention, and how it is that we recognize consent to the best interpretation. As is well-known, the content of this theory (chapter two) takes both "thick" and "thin" forms, the former the culturally relative sets of understandings of how goods ought to be distributed within particular societies, the latter a (nearly) universally shared minimal morality which is "reiterated in every substantive moral and political code" (32) and which enshrines basic human rights.

While Walzer is perhaps most noted for the former understanding of morality, Orend is primarily concerned to show how his just war theory reflects the commitments of minimal morality: "Justice in wartime consists of adhering to the terms of this thin code . . ." (36). Orend begins here by fleshing out Walzer's response to alternatives to just war theory (chapter three). He explains Walzer's opposition of just war theory to realism, pacifism, and utilitarianism, argues convincingly that the breadth of the arguments forwarded is limited, and attempts to supply insights that would allow Walzer to respond more adequately in each case.

In discussing (chapters four to six) Walzer's understanding of the different dimensions of just war theory, Orend provides a full and clear discussion of its normative commitments, and argues for Walzer's essential continuity with it, while noting points where his argument merits further development or examination. For example, Orend urges that Walzer ought to take more seriously the significance of public declaration by a legitimate authority in going to war (chapter four), he notes the tendency, which Walzer ne-

glects, of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* questions to blend into one another (chapter five), and he argues (chapter six) that while Walzer does make a contribution to the *jus post bellum* literature, it is presented as a spotty “adjunct to the topic of *jus ad bellum*” (135) and needs greater systematization and elaboration. Before offering a summary of his discussion in the Conclusion, Orend urges Walzer, drawing particularly on the work of Thomas Pogge and John Rawls, to take more seriously questions of international justice and the possibility of some form of global governance (chapter seven).

While Orend succeeds in providing a sympathetic reconstruction and often needed amplifications of Walzer’s thought, the religious or theological ethicist is likely to find his discussion overly modest, too often stopping short at just those points it seems necessary to push deeper. Part of the problem, I would suggest, lies in his focus. Many of the internal tensions he identifies in Walzer’s just war thought are never dealt with sufficiently, and they arguably point to possibly damning problems in Walzer’s moral and political theory. To take one example, Orend notes both Walzer’s general rejection of utilitarian thinking about war, and his claims that the just aim of a just war is rights vindication. As he points out, these commitments clearly stand in tension with Walzer’s doctrine of supreme emergency, which allows the restraint on utilitarian calculation to be waived and genuine rights to be violated. He tries to account for situations of supreme emergency in terms of moral tragedy; but this is not what Walzer does. Given this, several directions of possible inquiry open up: some examination, for example, of his axiology and its viability would perhaps be helpful here. Does Walzer believe the world to be morally botched at some fundamental level? Additionally, greater attention to the precise nature of “rights”—not simply how Walzer actually conceives them, but also how he ought to conceive them—seems to be in order. It may also appear that this tension points to a fundamental incoherence in Walzer’s attempt to hold together liberal and communitarian commitments. Orend notes the centrality of the concepts of protected space and autonomy in Walzer’s thinking, points where these commitments meet, but he never examines them in any systematic or critical manner that would enable one to more deeply understand or evaluate tensions such as those just noted.

Given Orend’s failure to engage these sorts of deeper questions and his nearly utter inattention to the religious dimensions and influences in Walzer’s thought (excepting p. 182), the real value of this work to religious

and theological ethicists lies in the clarity of its discussion of the just war tradition and its more modest exhibition of at least the appearance of continuity across Walzer's corpus. These are significant achievements, although they are perhaps less than one might hope for.

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The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology. By Volker Küster. Translated by John Bowden. Orbis Books, 2001, xiii and 242 pages. First published under the title *Die vielen Gesichter Jesu Christi: Christologie interkulturell*, Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchener-Vluyn, 1999.

Volker Küster takes on the challenge of intercultural theological discourse, and in doing so he sets the tone for further dialogue and openness between the distinct theological approaches that have emerged recently in various contexts of the globe. From India, to Latin America, to Japan, to South Korea, to South Africa, he examines several contextual and cultural sketches and brings them into dialogue with each other, seeking out their commonalities, divergences, and opportunities for ecumenical learning (36).

The book is strategically structured in three sections: first, taking as his point of departure Clifford Geertz's notion of culture "as a complex fabric of meaning and system of symbols created by men and women, which we must interpret like a text" (3), Küster correctly affirms that culture and religion are dialectically related and reciprocally interpenetrate each other (4).

Drawing from Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, Küster discusses the difference between *contextual* theology and the various terms of cultural anthropology: *enculturation*—the particular culture the person is born into; *acculturation*—the contact between two cultures and the reciprocal effect which emerges; and *accommodation*—to bring into agreement with one's culture foreign cultural aspects. According to him, it is the interplay of these terms that results in what he calls *inculturation* of the Christian message: the adoption of the Gospel by the host culture and in turn creating the opportunity for transforming it (24). In other words, given that the Gospel message and mission are to be understood as culturally mediated (24), it is quite evident that the issue of concern here is the extent to which it can be incorporated into other cultures. In his theological project, Küster manages to demonstrate that there is no such thing as "religion in the abstract": no religion is void of cultural symbols (4). And it is to that end that he advocates

the importance of cross-cultural dialogue. More importantly, and with great sensitivity to the theological approaches he examines, he maintains the interconnection of people's experience of faith in their particular cultural context, the biblical narrative, and the Christian tradition.

In the second section of the book, which is the longest, Küster examines a gallery of contextual theologians from various geographical settings. Taking a primarily Christological framework, he engages in a careful and enlightening conversation with them. He argues that in any Christian theological discourse the issue of importance is the criteria for which a confession of Christ is made, and the boundaries of legitimacy as to how Christ is presented. To him, then, Christology is the hermeneutical key with which to interpret other theological approaches: it is Christology that decides whether, for the person concerned, faith in Jesus Christ finds a home in its context or not (1). Thus, it is in the light of his Christological hermeneutical lenses that he analyzes the various contextual and inculturation theological endeavors; this is the most instructive part of his work.

In his third and final portion, Küster outlines his findings. He mentions the similarities and differences he encounters in his study of these theological approaches and concludes that these theological projects tend to draw material exclusively from the gospel narratives. He proposes that both contextual theologies, which stress issues of human dignity, and inculturation theologies, which revolve around specific theological themes that seek the validation of their particular culture, would accomplish their goal more effectively by adopting Paul's doctrine of "justification by faith." This may prove to be a rich source of theological argumentation to bolster their claims (193).

As to the weaknesses in the book, it would be helpful for Küster to admit that whatever his theological position in theology and Christology may be, his is also a very contextual and culturally predisposed theological expression. He seems oblivious to the fact that whatever he calls "Christian tradition" is Western-European in character, and it by no means represents the entire scope and extent of our Christian heritage.

Additionally, by accentuating his cross-cultural theological project with very little mention of inter-religious dialogue, the author betrays his initial intention to keep the door open for dialogue with these theological expressions. In my opinion, both cross-cultural issues and inter-religious concerns must be dealt with concurrently—in a healthy tension—if the ecumenical project is to succeed.

In the final analysis, what the reader encounters in this volume is a well-organized and easy-to-follow resource. Küster provides us with a helpful manual for students with little or no knowledge of contextual and inculturation expressions of theology. As for those already familiar with these theological motifs, this book proves to be a rich source of bibliographical material. This book not only raises important issues concerning the relation of culture and faith experience, it also offers important critical concerns that cannot be dismissed easily by theologians, the clergy, and ecumenical circles alike.

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The Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as Religious Founders. Edited By David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond. Eerdmans, 2001, ix and 702 pages.

At a point in history when religious intolerance and conflict are escalating worldwide, *Rivers of Paradise* is a timely publication. In introductory essays, both Hans Küng (viii, ix) and David Noel Freedman (8) emphasize that the purpose of the volume is to promote peace among religious people. But if peace is the purpose, dialogue is the means. Küng states the issue as follows: “[T]here will be no peace between the religions without a dialogue between the religions” (ix). *Rivers of Paradise* is a major contribution to this dialogue.

The book explores the lives of five founders of world religions—Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad. It chronicles what is known of these founders and introduces the reader to the cultural and religious worlds that first heard their messages. Each founder is attributed a chapter in the book.

In the introduction, David Noel Freedman employs the “river of paradise” described in Genesis 2:10–14 as a metaphor which he then enlarges to include each of the five world religions (4). He identifies Judaism, oldest of the world religions (ca. 1200 BCE) and a source of Christianity and Islam, as the original river that flowed from Eden. Then he links each of the other religions to the four tributaries named in Genesis, according to the chronological order in which they emerged. Buddhism (563–483 BCE) is identified with the Pishon, Confucianism (551–479 BCE) with the Gihon, Christianity (6 BCE–30 CE) with the Tigris, and Islam (570–632 CE) with the Euphrates.

In his chapter entitled, “Moses, Torah, and Judaism,” Carl S. Ehrlich (York University, Toronto) describes why and in what way Moses can be considered Judaism’s founding figure. He also describes the central place of the Torah in Judaism and gives a brief sketch of the religion’s history. He then delves into the relatively unsuccessful search for a “historical” Moses (20–40) and reconstructs the life of the prophet from Scripture (40–115). Ehrlich concludes his chapter with a brief discussion of the legacy of Moses in the development of Judaism as a religion.

Richard S. Cohen (University of California, San Diego) contributes the next chapter, “Shakyamuni: Buddhism’s Founder in Ten Acts.” Cohen begins by putting four “historical Buddhas” in their respective contexts, showing how four different Buddhas, Amithabha, Konakamana, Kalachakra, and Shakyamuni, have been known in history (121–24). He then proceeds to explain the meaning of the Buddha, stating that although Buddhists universally regard Shakyamuni Buddha as the historical founder of their religion in the current age, there is no evidence that Buddhists ever considered Shakyamuni to be the *only* Buddha (124). Cohen also argues that Shakyamuni Buddha cannot be called a prophet in the Weberian sense, since that would entail a transgression of actual Buddhist representations of the Buddhas (138). Finally, Cohen suggests that we cannot inquire about the Buddha without also asking, “buddha for whom?” (141). Because of this, Cohen chooses to describe Shakyamuni as a founder of the faith within the framework of ten deeds that he had to perform as Buddha before entering Nirvana (143–227).

Mark Csikszentmihalyi (University of Wisconsin, Madison) wrote the third chapter, entitled “Confucius.” Csikszentmihalyi also takes issue with Weber’s classic typology, particular because Weber described Confucius as a founder of a “school of philosophy” rather than a prophet (300). Csikszentmihalyi skillfully shows how the portrayal of Confucius differs depending on the literature *and* interpretation of the literature. In the concluding paragraphs, Csikszentmihalyi argues that due to the variety of Confucianisms and their diffuse character, it would be best to say that Confucianism had a variety of founders who could all be referred to by the name Confucius (307).

In his chapter on Christianity, Michael J. McClymond (Saint Louis University) examines the founder of Christianity through the lens of recent developments in the scholarly “quest for the historical Jesus.” After an intro-

duction, McClymond discusses the sources and methods of study used in developing a picture of the life and teachings of Jesus. He then gives a summary of Jesus' biography, followed by an overview of the geographical, political, cultural, and religious contexts in which Jesus operated. Jesus' preaching, deeds, and teachings are discussed as well as the controversies of his career. Finally McClymond focuses on the final week of Jesus' life and offers some brief remarks on the resurrection. He concludes with a brief discussion of the origin of Christology and suggests that it "lies in Jesus' entire mode of self-presentation, his whole way of acting and speaking" (455).

Daniel C. Peterson (Brigham Young University) begins his chapter, "Muhammad," by giving an overview of the historical context from which Islam emerged. He then describes the Arabian Peninsula and the cultural and religious environment into which Muhammad was born. Peterson describes the Prophet's birth, childhood, calling, and initial rejection at Mecca, as well as the *hira* (emigration to Yathrib), conquest of Mecca, and consolidation of Muhammad's political and religious power over Arabia. In his closing reflections Peterson suggests that Muhammad was a man of unusual charisma, honest, and genuinely convinced that his revelations had come from a source outside himself (610, 612).

In the penultimate chapter of the book, McClymond reevaluates Max Weber's theory of religious leadership in the light of these five religious leaders and organizes his discussion around four themes—reaffirmation, radicalization, ritualization, and responsiveness. In the final chapter, the book's other contributors respond to McClymond's analysis.

In a book intended to foster dialogue among the religions it seems somewhat odd that the central metaphor—the "rivers of paradise"—should come from one particular religion. Forcing traditions like Buddhism and Confucianism, in which the Hebrew Scriptures play no role, to fit a biblical image may in fact diminish the volume's potential to promote dialogue. Csikszentmihalyi's jibe could perhaps be turned into a critique of the book itself: "If Muhammad, Buddha, and Christ were all sitting at a bar, can we say that they have something in common? Well, we can say with certainty that we put them together at the same imagined bar" (675).

This criticism, however, should not detract from the fact that *Rivers of Paradise* is a truly valuable book and achieves its stated aim of promoting peace among the religions. Although the volume's contributors were careful to preserve the distinctiveness of the various religions, McClymond sug-

gests that “almost all of these traditions include elements that favor a policy of nonviolence” (657). In the context of a strife-ridden world, this is indeed a noble accomplishment.

RETIEF MÜLLER

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America. By Mark Lewis Taylor. Fortress Press, 2001, xvi and 208 pages.

The most recent book of Mark Taylor, the Princeton Seminary theologian of culture, is a Christian response to America’s system of prison buildup and burgeoning death row population. He is uniquely qualified to write such a book, serving as coordinator of Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal (AMAJ). Taylor sees America as an empire bent on a “theatrics of terror.” His book, however, is not merely a doomful critique; it is also an invocation of the way of the cross in countering the terror aggravated by the so-called *Pax Americana*.

Taylor turns to the concept of the executed God in proposing a “theatrics of counterterror.” The designation *executed* God, which he prefers to the less politicized *crucified* God, emphasizes the brutal reality of Roman executionary politics, of which Jesus was a victim. It is given a Tillichian twist, so that God is identified both with a “deeper power” (arising out of nature and the vitality of life) and with a “wider power” (the unifying source of significance among diverse socio-political movements of emancipation). This means that Taylor’s executed God “corresponds less to Jesus’ body and life and more to an entire way of the cross in which Jesus participated” (7).

The book is divided into two basic parts—the first describing the threat of lockdown America and its relationship to American imperialism; the second explicating three interdependent qualities that comprise the way of the cross. Taylor begins by identifying several dimensions to the American prison system complex, including wrongful convictions, racial imbalance, and executions performed as state-sanctioned ritual. On this latter point, his objections to the death penalty are less theologically oriented than grounded in a conviction that the practice of execution generates a “bureaucracy of death” and illegitimate state power. Taylor argues that the whole phenomenon of what he calls “Gulag America” is a threat to all. It encroaches on every citizen’s freedom through the social regimentation that it demands, specifically, increased policing. It also signals the loss of popular sovereignty

in democracy, for entrusting the state with the power of execution invariably fosters governmental corruption and deceit.

Taylor contends that Gulag America's greatest adverse impact is on the economically and racially disenfranchised. In American capitalism there is a kind of zero-sum game at work. Economic disparity is not an accident: the poor exist *because* the rich accumulate wealth. In view of the social volatility of marginalized peoples, particularly those of color, an elaborate scheme of punishment and sacrifice has been concocted to safeguard the rich and to keep the poor in check—all in the name of fidelity to a free market economy. Taylor argues further that the growth of Gulag America has nourished the *Pax Americana*, a term synonymous with American imperial hegemony. Such an empire must be resisted, and Taylor appeals to the way of the cross—the executed God—for the impetus to accomplish this task.

In the second part of the book, the way of the cross is unfolded as a theatrics of counterterror. Its first quality is “adversarial politics,” a notion derived from both Jesus and Paul. Utilizing the resources of social science criticism, Taylor locates the historical Jesus firmly within the anti-imperial ethos of Galilee. Jesus was thus concerned with the swelling numbers of those economically deprived and politically subjugated; he was also driven by the constant realization that, due to excessive taxation and debt, Galileans were engaged in a struggle for their lands. Following in this tradition, Paul adopted an anti-imperial stance, a fact evidenced by his placing Jesus, an executed criminal, at the center of his thought. Hence Taylor maintains that Pauline solidarity with one crucified implies a general association with the downtrodden and scorned and, in turn, with the terrorized.

The second quality of the way of the cross is “dramatic action” or, as Taylor defines it, “stealing the show.” Here Jesus is taken as a prototypical model. For Taylor, it was Jesus’ crucifixion that ultimately stole the show because it generated in his followers a resurrection faith that denied Rome its imperial sway over life and death. Taylor recognizes, however, that today’s followers of the executed God cannot simply parrot the resistance tactics of Jesus; they must work out their own ways of stealing the show. Taking his cue from Jesus, Taylor suggests that a theatrics of counterterror must involve bodily confrontation, for this “actually helps rid the gut of the terror the state seeks to implant there” (113). It also demands creativity and originality, a *sine qua non* for galvanizing the churches and the wider public. The goal of such a theatrics of counterterror is “triumph” (i.e., a celebration of the diminishing forces of empire). What is the basis of this triumph? Taylor contends that

those engaged in bodily confrontation are led into contact with a mystical power resident in the earth itself. This deeper power of the executed God provokes a wider power by including increasing numbers of diverse peoples' movements in the theater of counterterror.

The organizing and building of such movements constitutes the third and culminating quality of the way of the cross. Christians today, notes Taylor, follow their original ancestors most closely "when they earn from empire the reputation of being unfaithful to the pieties of the powerful" (133). Regrettably, that is not happening enough. This leads Taylor to suggest that those Christians whom he dubs "impious Galileans" may actually find themselves holding less in common with those inside their own churches than with other impious Galileans who do not profess a Christian faith. He thus issues a clarion call for Christians to organize movements of resistance that transcend faith boundaries. The book concludes with examples of this sort of transreligious organization, such as the No More Prisons! project and the various movements in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Taylor should be applauded for the book. It is refreshing to find such a trenchant and no-holds-barred critique of America's imperial sensibilities. Moreover, his notion of theatrics serves to sharpen the focus and meaning of Christian praxis. That being said, there are weaknesses to note. Taylor appears to discount the devastating impact that a culture of oppression such as Gulag America can have on human relationships and goals of resistance. It is unfortunate that he offers no sustained discussion of the concept of hope. His minimalist view of Jesus' resurrection and cryptic deeper power mysticism prompt the following question: Where do followers of the executed God turn when the sheer weight of empire clouds their vision?

The book's most serious problem, however, lies in Taylor's seeming indifference to church and tradition. What ultimately matters for him is not membership in an institutional church but the fomenting of a theatrics of counterterror. Do the churches then exist for anything other than contributing to the struggle for socio-political emancipation? Furthermore, what is the reason for holding fast to an explicitly Christian faith? Taylor's apathetic ecclesiology frees him to assert a revisionist doctrine of God, rooted in the theology of Tillich. God thus becomes lopsidedly immanent and impersonal, identified more with the way of the cross than with Jesus' actual person. The practical implications of this proposal loom large: How does one worship a "way"? And to whom is petitionary prayer directed? Taylor is

silent about the role of prayer in the theater of counterterror. In fact, it is uncertain whether he can say anything at all, given his conception of God.

Despite these shortcomings, the book cannot be dismissed outright. It is a work of clarity, and hence should prove accessible to the wide audience for which it is intended. As a summons to resistance, the book's relevance is very timely. It can only be hoped that Taylor's controversial perspectives on God and church do not alienate more theologically traditional readers and discourage them from instigating a theatrics of counterterror so desperately needed today.

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History of the World Christian Movement, Vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453. By Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist. Orbis Books, 2001, xvi and 519 pages.

In their cooperative work, *History of the World Christian Movement*, Dale Irvin (New York Theological Seminary) and Scott Sunquist (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary) attempt to tell the history of Christianity from a new and fresh perspective. The volume examines this history of Christianity in the context of a wide range of regions, cultures, and religions, from the inception of the Christian movement to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The book consists of six parts and thirty-eight chapters. Each chapter represents the expansion of the Christian movement into a new region. Western and non-Western regions are equally covered. To achieve this balance, Irvin and Sunquist collaborated with more than forty scholars from six continents and a variety of denominational communities. In a very real sense, the volume reflects the contributions of these consultants and marks a new trend in the study of church and missions history.

In part one, "Into All the World: Beginning of the World Christian Movement," the authors depict the inception of Christianity as *the Jesus Movement*. They also examine the religions with which Christianity had to contend: Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism. Part two, "Diverse Trajectories of the Early Christian Movement," considers the diverse expressions of Christianity which developed as it spread into new lands. In the third section of the book, "The Great Church Takes Shape," the authors delve into the process by which diverse forms of Christianity converged towards a Catholic faith. However, Sunquist and

Irvin skillfully balance the dynamics of convergence and divergence within the Christian movement. Though a universal faith, Christianity retained a large measure of diversity.

Part four, “The Age of the Imperial Church,” contains chapters on the “consolidation” of Christianity as the barbarians began converting around the fourth century. During this time, Christianity spread beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire. The authors demonstrate how the diverse political factors at work in this consolidation process produced dissenting as well as affirming groups. In the fifth part of the book, “New Challenges, New Beginnings,” Sunquist and Irvin investigate the impact of Islam (i.e., the “new challenge”), the great historical decline of Christianity and also the spread of Christianity into Iceland and China in the second millenium (i.e., the “new beginnings”). During this period, the concept of Christendom developed in Europe while elsewhere Christians began to encounter other religions. In China, the authors suggest, the concepts of one of those other religions, Buddhism, were utilized to articulate the Christian message (314). Toward the end of part six, “New Political Horizons,” the authors contrast the decline of the Western church with the ascendance of Christianity in the non-Western world. The final chapter describes the fall of Constantinople and the emergence of Moscow as a Christian center. At the close of the volume, Ethiopia and Russia represent the primary Christian posts outside the boundaries of European Christendom.

The authors highlight four aspects of Christianity. The first is its global nature. The book is impressive in its encompassing comprehensiveness. It covers Christian history in lands as far-ranging as Iceland and China, Ethiopia and Russia. It goes beyond the imperial dominions of Rome and Persia. It covers a wide range of social groups, including some of the most marginalized: laity and women. In fact the authors contend that Jesus’ mission was characterized by empathy for marginalized people. Jesus’ unusual openness to women, for instance, was a radical challenge to social and religious mores of the time (23).

The second aspect of Christianity highlighted by the authors is its *dynamism*. Sunquist and Irvin indicate this dynamic character of Christianity by referring to it as a “movement.” The use of “movement” also reflects the authors’ desire to avoid focusing on any one denomination or institution. The *History of the World Christian Movement* presents Christianity not as a static tradition or doctrine but as a trans-regional and trans-cultural moving force. The shape of Christianity is forged within the tension between par-

ticularity and universality, unity and diversity, Catholic and sect. The process is dynamic and open-ended. The authors use this reality to justify their consideration of both mainstream and marginal movements, both orthodoxies and heresies. The book covers Montanism, Novatianism, and Donatism, shedding historical light on the socio-political and cultural factors in the development of heterodox movements.

Third, Sunquist and Irvin emphasize the translatability of Christianity. The spread of Christianity involves successive cross-cultural translations as the gospel message crosses borders of languages, cultures, and ethnic communities. "Having spread so rapidly and across such great distances in geography, the movement inevitably faced questions of identity amid its differences. From the earliest days Christians in different cultural settings had been actively translating the message of the apostles into their own various languages and ways of understanding the world" (99). The first breakthrough in translation, the authors suggest, occurred when Jesus the *messiah* was confessed as *kurios* (Lord Jesus). The *Heliand* (or *The Saxon Gospel*), which portrayed Jesus as a Saxon warrior, represents another cultural translation (341).

Finally, the book highlights the missionary nature of Christian history. The world Christian movement is a missionary movement, and in the broadest sense the whole history of Christianity is the history of missions. Accordingly, the authors categorize the early apologists such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen as missionaries. These early theologians all felt that utilizing the philosophical framework of their context would enable others to better understand the meaning of the gospel (125). Irvin and Sunquist even portray "heretical" missionaries such as Bardaisan and Mani as representatives of the "ongoing missionary task of engaging philosophy and culture" (128).

The volume excellently demonstrates how the various cultural milieus into which Christianity has moved have shaped its practice and theology, and in the process throws light on the global nature of Christianity, an aspect ignored by many traditional textbooks of Christian history. Though somewhat long, the book's length allows a wide range of regions and issues to be covered more than superficially. The footnotes were kept to a minimum, making the text more accessible to students of Christian history. But each part is accompanied by an annotated bibliographical list of recommended readings which will be useful to the more serious scholar. For this reason, *History of the World Christian Movement* would make an excellent

textbook for college, seminary, or even congregational courses on Christian history.

In the second or third century, an anonymous writer wrote to Diognetus saying of Christians, “Every foreign land is their homeland, and every homeland a foreign land” (96). This paradoxical statement is perhaps the most apt description of the Christian experience.

HYUNG JIN PARK

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Warranted Christian Belief. By Alvin Plantinga. Oxford University Press, 2000, xx and 508 pages.

Warranted Christian Belief, the final installment in Alvin Plantinga’s trilogy on epistemology, contains the culmination of Plantinga’s ongoing defense of the rationality of Christian belief. Warrant, for Plantinga, is a technical term that identifies “that property—or better, *quantity*—enough of which is what makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief” (xi). While lucky guesses about some fact might turn out to be true, a person does not *know* the guessed fact. Some additional feature is required in order for someone’s true beliefs to be considered knowledge. In *Warrant: The Current Debate*, Plantinga describes different attempts at defining this elusive property, all of which fail for various reasons. In *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga locates warrant within the proper functioning of those cognitive faculties designed, either by God or through natural selection, to produce true beliefs. Now, in *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga presents a model of religious belief-formation where religious beliefs are held to be the outputs of a particular cognitive faculty. Plantinga borrows John Calvin’s term, and identifies this faculty as the *sensus divinitatus*—the “sense of divinity” God has implanted in each human being.

Plantinga begins by distinguishing between *de facto* and *de jure* objections to Christian belief. A *de facto* objection asserts that Christian belief is false, while a *de jure* objection asserts “that Christian belief, whether or not true, is at any rate unjustifiable . . . not up to snuff from an intellectual point of view” (ix). Though *de jure* objections abound, Plantinga observes that it is exceedingly difficult to identify within *de jure* objections exactly what property it is that Christian belief uniquely is supposed to lack, or from which intellectual malady Christian believers uniquely are supposed to suffer, such that Christian belief may rightly be identified as deficient. Parts one

and two are thus devoted to defining a precise and non-trivial *de jure* objection.

Part one deals with various Kantian treatments of religious belief that, if true, would entail that the concept of Christian belief is incoherent. If a certain interpretation of Kantian epistemology is correct, and the concepts by which we organize experience necessarily are limited to finite and immanent objects of perception, then it is impossible for traditional Christian belief actually to be about God, for God, by definition, cannot be the subject of terms and concepts that Christians ordinarily think refer to God. Plantinga, however, thinks that Kant's view "is, to say the least, rather startling" and in need of powerful arguments—none of which are in the offing. Thus, according to Plantinga, neither Kant himself, nor neo-Kantians like Gordon Kaufman and John Hick, provide sufficient reason to think that one's concepts cannot refer to God.

In part two, Plantinga asks whether a precise *de jure* objection may be found within either classical foundationalism or from the two "masters of suspicion," Freud and Marx. Classical foundationalism in the tradition of Locke—the view that beliefs are justified if and only if they are properly a part of the foundation of one's cognitive structure (where standards for admission to the foundations are very high) or inferred validly from foundational beliefs—is rejected because of self-referential incoherence. It is within Freudian and Marxist critiques of religion that Plantinga identifies a precise *de jure* objection. Freud and Marx, states Plantinga, "are best construed . . . as complaining that Christian belief is not produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly and aimed at truth . . . [they] are really complaining that theistic belief and religious belief generally *lack warrant*" (152–53).

In response to the Freud/Marx objection, part three contains Plantinga's detailed model of Christian belief-formation where Christian belief is formed by a properly functioning, truth-oriented cognitive faculty, the *sensus divinitatus*. Plantinga is not defending the warranted status of mere theistic belief. Rather, he asserts that the Holy Spirit reveals the "great truths of the gospel" to one's mind and seals them on one's heart, enabling the believer to have the right affection towards Christian beliefs. Thus, if Christian beliefs are true they are very likely warranted—*de jure* objections, then, are not independent of *de facto* objections.

Plantinga casts an eye toward potential defeaters for his model in part four. Plantinga's model is consistent with a conservative read of the Bible, and so he asks whether modern biblical criticism undermines his position.

In a typical Plantingian move, Plantinga asserts that secular assumptions that preclude the possibility of God interacting with the world are assumptions presented without argument. Christians, however, acknowledge the role of the Holy Spirit in presenting and communicating divine will through the Bible, and “until someone gives a decent argument for the conclusion that they *are* mistaken, they need not be impressed by the result of scholarship that ignores this further source of belief” (416). Plantinga maintains that post-modernist wisdom assumes falsely that historical context eliminates access to “objective” truth. Moreover, pluralist wisdom moves too quickly from the facts of religious pluralism to the assumption that the prior probability of one’s religious belief is low. However, contra post-modernist and pluralist objectors, Plantinga holds that these assumptions do nothing to undermine *his* belief that core Christian beliefs are produced by the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatus*. Plantinga concludes his treatment of potential defeaters with a look at evidentialist arguments from evil and suffering. Suffering might present a defeater to one with no (or, perhaps tentative) theistic commitments, but, according to Plantinga, a theist in whom the *sensus divinitatus* is functioning properly will not be irrational in maintaining theistic belief in spite of evil.

Warranted Christian Belief is an important book for anyone interested in philosophy of religion and questions relating to the rationality of religious belief. Regardless of whether one accepts Plantinga’s assumptions or conclusions, Plantinga guides the reader with great skill through deep and sometimes turbulent water. As in some of Plantinga’s other work, the body text of *Warranted Christian Belief* is presented in two sizes. The larger size contains the main argument and is, in the main, accessible to the educated non-specialist, while more technical philosophical discussions are carried out in smaller print. Central points from the earlier two books in the *Warrant* series are summarized at points throughout this third volume, making it a helpful survey of the entire series. Plantinga’s prose is lively, informative, and seasoned with dry wit, all of which combine to make his work an enjoyable, if not an easy, read.

Readers who are sympathetic to theology in the Reformed tradition will find much in Plantinga’s book with which to agree (indeed, the theory of knowledge developed by Plantinga and others is called “Reformed Epistemology”). However, readers who are less optimistic about the relationship of divine will and human cognition will resist the notion that belief in God is warranted through the proper functioning of a cognitive faculty. Similarly,

readers who identify a central role for natural theology in the formation of warranted religious belief will resist locating belief in God within the foundations of one's cognitive structure. And, finally, some will find Plantinga's conclusion that Christian belief is warranted if true, decidedly underwhelming. Nonetheless, Plantinga succeeds in showing that *de jure* objections to religious belief depend on *de facto* assumptions, supporting Plantinga's conclusion that *de jure* objections do not stand in the way of warranted Christian belief.

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The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700. By Craig M. Koslofsky. St. Martin's Press, 2000, xiii and 223 pages. *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe.* Edited by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall. Cambridge University Press, 2000, xiii and 324 pages.

These two fine new contributions to the study of death in early modern Europe shed new light on the impact of the Reformation on death rituals and attitudes toward death and the afterlife. They explore how, both before and after the Reformation, attitudes toward death and death rituals were interrelated with other aspects of early modern community life. In doing so, they confirm the observations of earlier scholars that in Protestant attitudes toward death one can see both important breaks and significant continuity with medieval tradition.

Craig Koslofsky in *The Reformation of the Dead* studies the impact of the Reformation on doctrinal developments relating to the hereafter, on cemeteries and their location, as well as on burial rites and funeral sermons in the German-speaking territories of the Holy Roman Empire, in particular the Saxon principalities. While demonstrating awareness of the continuities between traditional and Protestant perspectives and practices, Koslofsky emphasizes the breaks with tradition. Koslofsky argues that "the Reformation helped separate the living from the dead *both spiritually and physically*, and that this parallel separation was *fundamental* to the development of the Reformation" (19) (*italics mine*).

Koslofsky's discussion of the understanding of purgatory in the writings of Wessel Gansfort, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, and Martin Luther addresses the spiritual separation of the living from the dead. The fifteenth-

century theologian Wessel Gansfort questioned the orthodox idea that suffering in purgatory is punitive, proposing instead that it is purgative, preparing the soul for union with God. Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, after initially rejecting the existence of purgatory, later adopted Gansfort's idea. Both Wessel and Karlstadt separated the living from the dead by their implication that prayers for suffering souls were unnecessary. Luther in his Ninety-five Theses insisted, like Wessel and Karlstadt, that suffering in purgatory is not punitive but purifying. Later, however, Luther rejected purgatory entirely and asserted the doctrine of the sleep of the soul between death and the general resurrection. Koslofsky argues that the doctrine of a purifying purgatory could not take hold because it severed the dead from the prayers of the living: "Medieval purgatory drew its meaning from intercession for the dead: a mystical or spiritual Purgatory which separated the dead from the prayers of the living was a shadowy construction that never became a vital doctrine" (39).

The second major focus of Koslofsky's book concerns the physical separation of the bodies of the dead from the spaces frequented by the living. Koslofsky argues, as have previous scholars, that this physical separation of the dead from the living parallels the spiritual separation. With the advent of the Reformation, in particular Luther's doctrine of salvation by faith alone, the doctrinal basis for burial *ad sanctos* was removed, and along with it the major obstacle to extramural burial. In this context Koslofsky discusses at some length the Leipzig burial controversy of 1536. After the Leipzig Disputation of 1519, the merchants and artisans of the city came to support the Reformation, while the university and Duke George opposed it. The Duke used various means to keep the Lutheran movement in check. Among other things he required Lutherans to bury their dead outside the city. Koslofsky points out that this strategy backfired, as Lutheran extramural funerals became large "displays of Lutheran solidarity" in Leipzig (59).

The third major aspect of the Reformation of the dead that Koslofsky describes is changes in funeral ritual. The traditional late medieval funeral was based on the theology of purgatory and the need of the souls of the deceased for the prayers of the living. The doctrine of salvation by faith eliminated the necessity of the masses and prayers for the dead that had been at the heart of the medieval funeral. Koslofsky points out that there is widespread evidence that initially the rejection of traditional funeral ritual led to the abandonment of funeral ritual altogether. Koslofsky then describes the development of the Lutheran funeral, arguing that it was designed to serve both

pastoral and social functions. Pastorally, the funeral served to comfort the living with the promise of the resurrection. Socially, the funeral reinforced the social order—the higher the social rank of the deceased, the more elaborate the funeral.

Finally, Koslofsky discusses the development of the funeral sermon, which by the end of the sixteenth century had become an established part of the Lutheran funeral. Koslofsky concludes that the success of the funeral sermon was due to “its ability to expound doctrine *and* honour the dead, thus balancing the distinctive religious and social meanings of the Lutheran funeral in early modern Germany” (114).

In sum, Koslofsky successfully demonstrates the first part of his thesis, namely that the Reformation effected a *spiritual* separation of the living from the dead. This separation was *fundamental* to the Reformation—if *fundamental* is understood in a doctrinal sense. The doctrine of salvation by faith alone eliminated purgatory and placed the dead beyond the reach of the prayers of the living. It made prayer for the dead not only superfluous, but also doctrinally wrong. Somewhat less convincing is the second part of Koslofsky’s thesis, namely that the Reformation brought about a parallel, equally fundamental, *physical* separation between the living and the dead. The doctrine of salvation by faith did, as Koslofsky notes, eliminate the theological rationale for burial *ad sanctos*. But it did not make burial in the churchyard theologically wrong in and of itself, as is demonstrated by the continued practice in some parishes of burying their pastors and other persons of rank in or near the church. Because of this, it might be argued instead that the Protestant theological separation of the souls of the dead from the living coincided with and possibly reinforced the already existing trend toward extramural burial for practical reasons in early modern Europe.

A number of themes taken up by Koslofsky recur in *The Place of the Dead*. This is a collection of fourteen essays by scholars from British and American universities prefaced by an introductory essay by the volume’s editors, Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall. Geographically, the volume is limited to studies of areas that today comprise Western Europe, with the exception of Graeme Murdock’s study on funeral sermons in Transylvania. Theologically, the balance is in favor of death in the Reformation: eight essays treat changes in death brought about during the Reformation, while three essays deal with death in the medieval period, and the remaining three concern death in France and Spain during the Counter Reformation. The variety of topics connected with death is quite broad, among them prayer

for the dead, ghosts and spirits, theology of the afterlife, burial practices, and funeral sermons.

In their introductory essay, Gordon and Marshall explain that the purpose of the volume is “to explore how groups of people in late medieval and early modern Europe sought to determine what the place of the dead should be, and how they managed to ‘place’ the dead in physical, spiritual, emotional, social and cultural terms” (2). The following comments will focus on three essays in this volume which touch on themes also treated in Koslofsky’s book.

Clive Burgess’ article on death and commemoration in All Saints’ parish in Bristol, England, is a contribution to the social history of death. Burgess addresses the issue of the obligations owed by the living to the dead, and the manner in which the living allowed the dead to shape their patterns of social organization. Burgess begins by pointing out that “death and commemoration are issues at the very core of Christianity” (44). At Sunday mass Christ’s death is symbolically reenacted. The liturgical seasons follow the life of Christ from birth to death. Church art and music reflect episodes from the life and death of Christ. Citing numerous examples, Burgess then proceeds to argue that the parishioners of All Saints’, through the process of giving gifts to the parish, “wove themselves into the liturgy” (53). Some gave donations stipulating that their name, and perhaps the names of their immediate family, be put on the *tabula memoria* and read out loud every Sunday, so that the congregation might pray for them. Thus they arranged to have their names mentioned and remembered in a way similar to the recitation of the names of the saints. Other parishioners endowed anniversary masses to be held for a number of years, which to a large extent were reenactments of their funerals. Thus the laity succeeded in having their own special days, much like saints’ days. Burgess asserts that in “regimes which were in any case repositories of sacred memory, it made perfect sense that individuals should seek to capitalise on this by dovetailing themselves into the repertory.” Further he writes that “those who deserved memory as exempla and those who sought commemoration as suppliants made an indelible mark both on contemporaries’ attitudes to life and death, and on parish regimes as centres of instruction and of intercession . . .” (64). Thus very clearly, religious beliefs about the afterlife, particularly purgatory, had an influence on how the laity (especially wealthy laity) related to their church, their clergy, and their fellow parishioners. Burgess concludes with a statement regarding implications of this culture of commemoration for the Reformation: “In sweeping away the saints, the Reformers had also to sweep

away the more humble dead, subverting—whether intentionally or not—the human urge to be remembered . . .” (64–65). It seems possible that perhaps the Lutheran funeral sermon, which, according to Koslofsky, functioned to comfort the living and to strengthen the social order, also served in place of prayers for the dead to satisfy the human urge to be remembered.

Peter Marshall’s article, “‘The map of God’s world’: geographies of the afterlife in Tudor and early Stuart England,” is a contribution to the history of ideas about the afterlife. Whereas Koslofsky offered an account of how purgatory came to be rejected, Marshall demonstrates that this Protestant rejection of purgatory at the beginning of the sixteenth century led in the course of the century to a rejection by both Protestant and Catholic divines of the idea that heaven, hell or the two limbos were geographical places. Advances in astronomy and geography, Marshall argues, contributed to this development. Concurrent with the tendency to reject geographical understandings of the location of the afterlife, Marshall notes a readiness on the part of theologians to develop metaphorical interpretations of heaven and hell, focusing on the “existential meaning” of heaven and hell “for the individual Christian” (126). There continued to be persons, however, both theologians and laity, who rejected these new metaphorical interpretations of the afterlife. Marshall cites the American clergyman W. R. Alger, who in the 1860’s compiled a history of the afterlife, as saying that “most people still think [Hell] is the interior of the earth” (129). Marshall’s essay shows clearly that intellectual doubts about geographical notions of the afterlife preceded the Enlightenment, and that they arose “within the bastions of orthodox Christianity itself” (111).

Penny Roberts’ study, “Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France,” is a contribution to the social history of death in French communities split by the Reformation. Like Burgess’ study, it links religious beliefs to patterns of social organization. Roberts demonstrates that burial practices in sixteenth-century France became “symbolic of the confessional rift within society” (140). Roberts points out that Catholics did not want Huguenots to be buried in established cemeteries, as the presence of heretics would “pollute” the sacred ground (131). Further, Catholics argued that Huguenots, in rejecting the Catholic deathbed sacraments, had given up their right to be buried in sacred ground. On the other hand, Huguenots continued to wish to be buried in the established cemeteries (139–40). In communities where they were in the majority, burials in these cemeteries continued. Where they were in the minority, however, they were compelled to establish their own extramural cemeteries. Roberts cites the

royal edict of interpretation dated December 14, 1563, which spelled out restrictions on the internment of Huguenots. They were to be buried in cemeteries outside the town in which they lived, to limit the size of funeral parties, and to bury their dead at night. Roberts does not raise the issue of whether or not the means of burial prescribed for the Huguenots might have had connotations of dishonorable burial.

Roberts argues that the development of extramural burial in France, and thus the physical separation of the living from the dead, took place for practical rather than doctrinal reasons. Burials were considered by authorities and Huguenots alike as a potential source of unrest, and thus both groups desired that Huguenot funerals take place quietly, at night, outside the city (146–47). This observation constitutes added evidence for the argument that the *physical* separation of the living from the dead was not *fundamental* to the Reformation, as Koslofsky argues, but rather took place for a variety of practical reasons.

Both Koslofsky's monograph and the Gordon/Marshall anthology contribute significantly to the study of death rituals and attitudes toward death and the afterlife in various regions of early modern Europe. Their emphasis on changes that took place in lands where the Reformation took hold is particularly helpful given that death in the Reformation remains less studied than death in the medieval period. The authors of both volumes bring to light numerous sources that thus far have been little studied or not studied at all. And finally, they supply up-to-date bibliographies on their topics.

AUSTRA REINIS

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition. By Hilarion Alfeyev. Oxford University Press, 2000, 338 pages.

Continuing the work of other Byzantine scholars who in recent decades have re-examined Symeon the New Theologian's place in and contribution to Orthodox tradition, Hilarion Alfeyev presents a detailed analysis of the famed Studite monk's teachings and contemporary monastic context and demonstrates the great extent to which traditional Orthodox patristics served as the basis of Symeon's highly experiential thought. According to Alfeyev, Symeon, a rather controversial figure in his own time (late tenth to early eleventh centuries), has too often been cast as a mystical maverick whose visionary encounters with the Divine Light, together with his emphasis on the efficacy of personal experience in the spiritual life of the faithful,

challenge the authority and supremacy of Orthodox tradition. While not diminishing the central role Symeon's personal visions of God play to his teachings, Alfeyev attempts to demonstrate that the New Theologian's own understandings of God, humanity, scripture, Christology, etc., are drawn from earlier Orthodox (primarily patristic) interpretations. Further, in highlighting the close connection between Symeon and his patristic forefathers, Alfeyev wishes to clarify the relationship between mysticism and tradition in general and concludes that within the Christian church "true mysticism is unimaginable and impossible outside of tradition" (274). Unfortunately, the author's penchant for drawing such over-generalized conclusions, in addition to his clichéd, inconsistent usage of the multivalent, context-bound concepts "mysticism" and "tradition," mar an otherwise well-documented overview of Symeon's teachings.

In underscoring Symeon's dependence upon Orthodox tradition, which broadly embraces scripture, liturgy, the creeds, and acts of the ecumenical councils, patristics, "and finally the personal spiritual experience of each believer from the beginning of Christianity up to the present" (6), Alfeyev divides his work into two thematic sections. The first section provides Symeon's historical, monastic, scriptural, and liturgical context by placing him into the wider frame of Studite monasticism (drawn from the life and spiritual direction of Constantinople's St. John of Stoudios Monastery, which becomes ubiquitous in the aftermath of the eighth- to ninth-century iconoclast controversies). Further, Alfeyev outlines the character and influence of the New Theologian's spiritual mentor, Symeon the Studite, whose emphases on tearful compunction and illumination become key themes for the younger Symeon. This elucidation of the close relationship and parallel experiences of the two Symeons is significant for Alfeyev's thesis, since it shows the monastic precedent, even conditioning, that drives the New Theologian's intimate encounters with the divine. The other two issues treated in the first section, relating Symeon the New Theologian's approaches to biblical exegesis and the ritual cycles of the Orthodox Church respectively, seem to belong more properly to the second section, which is dedicated specifically to Symeon and the patristic tradition. Alfeyev is more interested in comparing Symeon's exegetical and liturgical approaches to those of the early church fathers than in exploring these as independent facets of Orthodox tradition in their own right.

Engaging in a detailed textual analysis of Symeon's abundant writings, comprised of discourses, hymns, epistles, chapters, and thanksgivings, Alfeyev devotes the second section of his work to a point-by-point chart-

ing of the New Theologian's attitudes towards hagiography, trinitarian polemic, theology, anthropology, ecclesiology, asceticism, and mysticism. In this analysis, Alfeyev attempts to debunk Symeon's individualist persona by demonstrating both his engagement with the entire spectrum of typical Orthodox patristic themes, and the fundamental congruence that exists between his views and those espoused by early church fathers like Gregory Nazianzen. As Alfeyev notes, Symeon cites Gregory Nazianzen more than any other church author, and Nazianzen's theological speculations, especially in regard to the historical revelation of God's light and the ultimate incomprehensibility of the Godhead, inform Symeon's own. While Gregory Nazianzen is the most prominent patristic influence, John Climacus, Maximos the Confessor, and Makarios of Egypt, among others, prove significant to Symeon as well. Although the author's segmentation of Symeon's thought into such clear-cut thematic categories at times seems artificial, and although the consistent conclusion that Symeon (an Orthodox saint) is indeed Orthodox seems somewhat forced and repetitive, the work provides lucid definitions of highly abstract and often misunderstood elements of Orthodox dogma, such as deification.

Alfeyev's work possesses other noteworthy strengths as well. The author's skills as a researcher shine in his deft handling of and familiarity with Byzantine primary source materials. This is particularly salient since he breaks new ground by exploring areas neglected in previous scholarship, such as Symeon the New Theologian's exegetical and theological treatment of Scripture and his liturgics (reviewed in the first section of Alfeyev's study). Additionally, the author points out methodological problems that continue to beset the field of Eastern Orthodox studies in general, of which the most serious is the persistence of a certain Western Christian "imperialism." As Alfeyev rightly maintains, too often a theological vocabulary generated by and primarily applicable to Roman Catholic and Protestant worldviews is imposed upon Eastern Orthodoxy. This vocabulary (which includes fundamental concepts like sacrament and mysticism) creates artificial categories and a facade of homogeneity between Eastern and Western Christianity.

This imposition of an alien vocabulary upon Eastern Orthodoxy is the crux of Alfeyev's critique of a Western scholarship which, in his view, necessarily opposes "mysticism" to "tradition" and distorts the legacy of Orthodox figures such as Symeon by considering them to be mystical mavericks who stray from Orthodoxy's orthodoxy (in view of this supposed opposition). Unfortunately, Alfeyev's reading of this Western scholarship is unso-

phisticated and his careful documentation of Symeon's thought gives way to banal over-characterizations which are especially troubling since neither the author's text nor his bibliography reveals familiarity with important texts analyzing the field of "mysticism," such as those authored by Evelyn Underhill.

In exploring how and to what extent Orthodox patristic interpretations shape Symeon's visionary teachings, the author hopes to unveil the vital link that exists between "mysticism" and "tradition," a link he claims Western scholars have overlooked (3). Citing a single source (S. T. Katz's *Mysticism and Religious Tradition*), Alfeyev concludes that within "the study of mysticism in general it is a commonplace to regard the mystic as 'the great religious rebel who undermines the orthodox establishment, placing his own experience above all the doctrines of accepted authorities, and who not infrequently engenders serious opposition even to the point of being put to death for heresy'" (3). Alfeyev claims that such a definition of the mystic as the non-traditional individualist has led many Western scholars to misunderstand Symeon and his true "Orthodoxy."

However, Alfeyev seems to be unaware that it is his own thesis, of the fundamental congruency of "mysticism" and "tradition," that is commonplace. Scholars (for example, Gershom Scholem's work in the Jewish context) in the field of "mysticism" have already pointed out that "mysticism" and "tradition" are not strict, easily definable categories that sit in binary opposition to one another, but are vitally interconnected. Alfeyev's disregard for such fundamental treatments of "mysticism" and "tradition" (even if founded upon non-Orthodox materials) severely damages the credibility of his own sweeping conclusions about Western scholarship and should alert the reader to approach other aspects of Alfeyev's thesis with great caution.

Indeed, the assumed opposition of the key terms "mysticism" and "tradition" is perpetuated by Alfeyev's narrow treatment of the concept "tradition" itself, which is never critically evaluated, but rather is colored by an Orthodox theological apologetics that attempts to demonstrate the internal homogeneity of its tradition. The author never interprets "the entirety of the centuries-old experience of the Universal Church" (6), which constitutes Orthodox tradition to be an indicator of the natural complexity and diversity within Orthodox *traditions*. The orthodoxy of Symeon's experiential approach and ecstatic visions as easily reveals the fundamental elasticity and heterogeneity of an Eastern Orthodoxy too often portrayed as static. If the "personal spiritual experience of each believer" (6) stands as a vital compo-

nent of Orthodox tradition, why does Alfeyev feel drawn to defend Symeon in the first place and ensure his constant conformity to patristic theology, which is itself simply one element of Orthodox tradition, not its entirety? In the end, Alfeyev is really less interested in exploring either “mysticism” or “tradition” as concepts than in endeavoring to maintain and defend an Orthodox “‘golden chain’ of sanctity” (276) that he believes flows unbroken from Christ, directly through Symeon the New Theologian to the present.

Alfeyev further clouds his thesis (or more clearly signals his apologetic bias) by failing to differentiate Orthodox “tradition” from more generic uses of the term. As the title of the work indicates, the author’s task is to delineate Symeon’s role in Orthodox “tradition,” a usage of the term defined within a particular religious context. However, this historically and culturally contextualized figure becomes an exemplar of a more universalized premise, in which the key concept of “tradition” seems to shift meanings. For example, when the author highlights what he considers the error of scholars who “oppose a formal and rationalistic ‘tradition’ to an enthusiastic and inspired ‘mysticism’” (274), he employs the term in a manner that seems to slip outside the Orthodox context. However, Alfeyev never alerts the reader to this potential change in meaning, perhaps due to his own apparent unawareness that this term can be utilized in a manner divorced from Eastern Orthodox usage.

In the end, Hilarion Alfeyev’s study of St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox tradition is a hybrid, highly inconsistent work, in which detailed patristic scholarship is used to support shaky, over-generalized conclusions. While providing the general reader a solid overview of this seminal Orthodox theologian, the work sheds little light (divine or otherwise) on the larger issues of mysticism and tradition.

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Theology After Liberalism: A Reader. Edited by John Webster and George P. Schnier. Blackwell, 2000, 396 pages.

A recent addition to the Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology series, *Theology After Liberalism* culls samplings from some of the most innovative and engaging recent theological projects, all of which share a concern to disentangle theology from liberalism. Excepting the introductory essays with

which the editors open the text, all the pieces in this volume were published previously as independent critical articles or parts of larger works. The following assesses the volume on its merits as an anthology intending to provide “a critical entry to key debates” (ii).

For those reading regularly in philosophical, ethical, and theological fields of the past twenty years, yet another text invoking the term “After” in its title may cause one to expect of this volume one more diatribe against the ills of Modernity. From the opening sentence, however, Schner and Webster make clear their intention to avoid the polemical tone and pejorative deployment of the term “liberalism” to which many other theologically and ethically minded “After” texts devote themselves. The editors eschew, as well, tailoring a set of readings that could be subsumed under the rubric of any one “School” (Yale or otherwise).

The two newly-commissioned pieces in the volume include Schner’s fifty-page overview of the historical complexes and philosophical concerns to which theology after liberalism responds, and Webster’s eight-page description of the set of family resemblances that makes the term “postliberal” a useful descriptor for the range of recent projects represented in the volume. In Webster’s deflated sense, “postliberal” is the least problematical referent for a set of family resemblances shared by the selected projects. Among others, these resemblances include a concern for constructive rather than critical dogmatics, an emphasis upon doctrine as opposed to methodology, descriptive rather than apologetic doctrinal work, an aversion to general theories, and a tendency to view Christianity as a set of cultural practices rather than an aggregate of propositional beliefs.

Following on the editors’ orientational essays, the *Reader* provides a sampling of doctrinal work after liberalism: Hans Frei on Christology, William Placher on the doctrine of God, Colin Gunton on soteriology, Oliver O’Donovan on moral theology, and J. Augustine DiNoia on inter-faith dialogue. Methodological reflections make up the next segment of the volume: James Buckley on hermeneutics, Andrew Louth on tradition, Kathryn Tanner on social analysis, and Franz Jozef van Beek on natural religion. Part IV presents three critical stances: Mary McClintock Fulkerson’s explication of a feminism informed by certain post-structuralist tools, Rowan Williams’ sympathetic yet compelling critique of George Lindbeck’s *The Nature of Doctrine*, and David Tracy’s effort to demonstrate that Revisionist theology can incorporate the useful insights of postliberal theologies while retaining

its intrinsic concern for apologetics. The volume concludes with the final chapter of Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine* as a classic statement of a theology after liberalism.

While Schnier's essay succeeds in sensitively presenting "liberalism," and Webster deftly describes the family characteristics of "postliberal" theologies, nowhere do the editors explicitly map out how the selections relate to one another, nor precisely which of the various postliberal attributes each selection exemplifies (a consideration far from self-evident). Such questions might easily have been answered by more full-fledged contextualizing remarks introducing the respective selections. Its paucity of transitional commentary may be the *Reader's* most detrimental shortcoming.

In several instances the transitions between selections leave one wondering not only the selection's relation to the broader scope of the respective thinker's project, but where it stands in relation to the other thinkers and projects collected in this volume. A more useful grasp of the whole represented by this cross-section of texts would require an explicit map rather than a smattering of cursory remarks.

The excerpt from Hans Frei's *The Identity of Jesus Christ*, for instance, refreshingly retrieves a text often overshadowed by Frei's other works, and represents a postliberal Christology as one that refuses to understand Jesus in terms other than those internal to the Gospel narrative account of what Jesus said and did. As such, this selection pinpoints one of the most influential and pregnant complexities of Frei's project—namely, his effort to derive a non-fundamentalist approach to Scripture that allows the strange new world within the Bible to reconfigure the world in which believers currently live. Yet, as presented in this collection, the Frei excerpt leaves the reader with no inkling of how his refusal to understand Jesus "in terms other than those in which his identity is enacted in the story" presupposes the historiographical account of interpretive practices in the Christian tradition that he fashioned in *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative*, nor how it prefigures his later formulation of what he called the "literal sense" of the Biblical text (65). It was, of course, precisely these hermeneutical concerns that placed Frei in extended conversation with David Tracy (a representative critic of postliberalism in this volume). Similar concerns drew both Lindbeck and Placher into exchanges with Tracy, as well. Aside from a few footnotes in Tracy's article that hint at these conversations with Frei, Placher, and Lindbeck, the *Reader* provides no trace that these exchanges have been, in

fact, incisive means by which these thinkers refined, enriched, and elucidated their respective projects.

The challenges presented by a rubric such as “theology after liberalism” seem comparable to those encountered by commentators upon “narrative theology” in recent decades. On one hand lies the temptation to reify what is, in fact, a range of interests and purposes sometimes loosely shared by a group of thinkers. On the other hand lies the temptation of demurring so completely from explicit connections and distinguishing features for fear of essentializing a brand of theology that one leaves one’s readers with few bearings by which to understand precisely how these thinkers and projects interrelate. *Theology After Liberalism* errs toward the latter temptation in its admirable efforts to avoid yet another anti-liberalism invective or to reify a theological school.

It is, finally, the abstracted feel of the collected pieces that makes some of them appear somewhat arbitrarily chosen, when in fact they are not. Yet only readers previously familiar with the various projects, conversations, interests, and purposes shared by these theologies after liberalism are likely to recognize the significant interrelations of the selections here presented—an audience for whom such a *Reader* may be slightly less useful.

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